

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker: Hon. members, on Thursday, May 17th, the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford rose on a point of order to object to language used by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale during Question Period earlier that day.

The language in question was the phrase 'dubious and self-serving decisions' used in reference to the work of the Legislative Management Committee.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford asked that I consider whether that language was unparliamentary.

I have consulted the transcript of Question Period for May 17th and see that the following remarks are attributed to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale:

"...the Legislative Management Committee is controlled by government members and meets behind closed doors. This can lead to dubious and self-serving decisions such as rejecting key recommendations by the conflict of interest commissioner."

Honourable members, section 34 (2) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly* states that:

"No member shall use language or words offensive toward the House or any member."

Also, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* (6th Edition) citation §484 (3) states as follows:

"...a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case..."

In the course of debate, members must be free in debate to disagree with or criticize decisions made by any committee of the House. In the case of the Legislative Management Committee, I recognize that this can present a challenge, as the

committee meets in camera and does not typically table a report of decisions.

Nonetheless, criticism of committee decisions should be restricted to the merits of the committee's decisions themselves, without delving into the individual or collective motives of the members.

This is particularly so in this case, in that the committee's proceedings were, pursuant to the Rules of this House, conducted in camera and the Member for Charlottetown-Parkdale is not a member of that committee and would not have any firsthand knowledge of the deliberations that went in to this decision.

Having stated this, hon. members, I am reluctant to find the members' remarks are unparliamentary, but I would strongly suggest that the Member for Charlottetown-Parkdale refrain from imputing unworthy motives to other members in the future and instead focus on the merits of decisions themselves.

Thank you, hon. members.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the Chamber and those in the gallery; those watching on various media platforms.

Let me lead, and I'm sure I do it on behalf of all hon. members in welcome Al MacDonald –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – our former Sergeant-at-Arms. It's the first time for Al to be in the Chamber as a visitor, or at least since his retirement.

We also have with us Jason and Jean Connor who are here from Australia. They're travelling on the cruise ship, and decided this was as a warm a spot to find –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Premier MacLauchlan: – as you can get in Charlottetown.

Welcome Jason and Jean.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Some of our regulars here; Cheryl MacLean; Alan Malone; Eddie Lund. Bob Foster, wouldn't be quite a regular. It's great to see you here, (Indistinct)

I want to mention, in particular, a delegation that's here from the Reading Town group; Lori Cheverie from the Bookmark; and Cindy Midgley and Barb Kissick, who are on the Reading Town committee. It's great work and we'll be hearing more about that in a statement.

Mention two things that are going on this week or upcoming, not too soon to be mentioning the Queen Elizabeth Hospital/Eastlink Telethon that will take place this weekend on Saturday and Sunday, in Stratford or on the Eastlink television channels with proceeds to support the worthy cause of medical equipment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I'm sure that folks can start planning their weekend around that and look forward to a successful event, which it always is.

Finally, this is Safe Boating Awareness Week. A week to promote safe and responsible boating practices, and we're told there are an estimated 15 million recreational boaters in Canada. I'm sure, on Prince Edward Island the number here would more than reflect the proportion nationally. Of course, to encourage everyone, who is boating for whatever purpose, to be safe and wish them well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise as well and to bring greetings on behalf of the official opposition, particularly to those individuals that might be watching this afternoon via the Internet or Eastlink.

I'm sure our distinguished guests from Australia are very heartfelt to hear that they're in a safe place. It's National Boating Week, as the Premier indicated, so what better time to be on a cruise ship? Welcome again to our Legislative Assembly. It's wonderful to have you here.

I'd also like to bring greetings, of course, to Eddie Lund, Cheryl MacLean, Al Malone, and, of course, to our retired sergeant-at-arms, Al MacDonald. It's wonderful to see you back here, sir.

I'd also like to bring to attention another delegation that has travelled from quite a distance to be here this weekend. This coming weekend in Fort Augustus, it's the traditional Irish settlement days.

There's a group that comes over every year from County Monaghan and in return, we have a group from Fort Augustus that travels back quite often. We had the Duffy family in here last week and a lot of the family from Anna and Charlie Duffy's family have been back and forth to Ireland quite a few times. It's a wonderful weekend in celebration of the heritage in Fort Augustus and I know they're probably polishing up the BIS as we speak because there are some activities there on Friday evening. At Paddy's Pub out in Fort Augustus, there will be a ceilidh on Saturday night and of course there will be a celebratory mass at St. Patrick's parish in Fort Augustus on Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m.

I do encourage anyone that's available or that's interested in celebrating the Irish history here on PEI to please look up any of the events and stop by. It's always a wonderful time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery. To our friends from Australia – the Premier mentioned that you found a warm spot here, but I've found occasionally – I don't know about anybody else in the

House, but sometimes the air can be a little chilly in here on occasion.

Welcome to Al MacDonald. Lovely to see you again, Al. And to Cheryl MacLean and particularly the group from Reading Town – I see Sharon MacKay's not with you today, but I've had some lovely discussions with Sharon about that wonderful initiative and it's lovely to see you today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone watching from home from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, in particular. I also want to welcome everyone to the gallery.

I wanted to start off with Jason and Jean Connor who I met while strolling from their cruise ship today and invited them to come in. I'd like to invite them – although you won't have a lot of time – to explore District 18 Rustico-Emerald if you get a chance out there – the Prince Edward Island Preserve Company and some great spots out there. Also, it's too bad you're going to be leaving in two and a half hours because it'd be interesting for you to partake of our debate on our referendum question regarding mixed member proportional representation versus our current first past the post – which I'm sure you have a very good opinion on there.

I wanted to welcome Cheryl MacLean as well. It's great to see her. Here too, as well, is Raoul Ntwali, who's a CFIB intern here under the guidance, I believe, of Erin McGrath-Gaudet. She's a great person to have as a mentor, so I'd be glad to have you there at CFIB too.

This morning I stopped by the service learning showcase out at Gulf Shore Consolidated that Sandra Skeffington put together and it was just really amazing to see the student projects. Everything from raised gardens, mini libraries, peer tutoring, there was a (Indistinct) health, and these were all things that were put together between cooperation between teachers, students, and the community without any additional government funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Oh, okay.

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

I thought you were waving at the Page.

[Laughter]

Mr. J. Brown: We've made that mistake before.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise in my capacity as Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture to welcome the folks from Reading Town here: Cindy Midgley, Barb Kissick, and Lori Cheverie. This is a group that does great work and I'll have a statement on this later and we'll talk a little bit more about what they're up to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Maci Kinch-Horatio Alger Canadian Scholarship

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate Maci Kinch on being awarded the Horatio Alger Canadian Scholarship. It is a \$5,000 scholarship given to a high school student in financial need who has overcome significant adversity while demonstrating strong character and academics.

Maci is the daughter of Gail Kinch and Jamie Clohossey. She is attending Westisle Composite High and will be graduating next month. She is an intelligent and confident young woman who will go on to have great success with whatever she chooses to do. Most importantly, she will have a helping hand in education with this scholarship.

The Horatio Alger association is an international organization and aside from giving scholarships to deserving students, they also recognize Canadians who has demonstrated perseverance and achieved great success in life.

This year, former Governor General David Johnston will be honored with the award. Previous winners include former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and hockey legend Wayne Gretzky.

I want to again congratulate Maci for her scholarship award and thank the Horatio Alger Association for giving deserving students like her the chance to succeed at the post secondary level.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Olivia MacNeill-Miss Teen Maritime International

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any time we can get up and speak about the youth, it's a pleasure.

Olivia MacNeill of Red Point was crowned Miss Teen Maritime International at a pageant in Dieppe, New Brunswick.

Olivia is a 15 year old and is the daughter of Jeff and Shelley MacNeill. As part of her new title she will have the opportunity to participate in Miss Teen Canada and Miss Teen North America in 2019.

Miss Teen wasn't the only title Olivia won. She also took home two additional titles; Miss Overall Top Fundraiser and Miss Popularity.

For Olivia, this was an experience of a lifetime and one she was extremely honoured to receive.

The We Charity formerly known as Free the Children, a worldwide development charity and youth empowerment movement was the charitable element of this year's pageant.

As part of Olivia's experience, she spent a significant amount of time learning about

the We Charity. With her title as top fundraiser, Olivia will have the opportunity to travel with other We Charity members to Guatemala and assist in a development project.

The competition focused on personality, intellect, ability to communicate with people, public speaking, charity platform, and overall desire to help people and make a difference.

I want to extend my congratulations to Olivia on her accomplishments and I wish her the best in Guatemala on her development project. I know Olivia will continue to do great things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Natural Asset Valuation

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

"You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone" is a phrase that all of us of course are very familiar with and it refers to taking things for granted; relationships, health, community, beauty – and how they can become almost invisible to us because of their routine familiarity, to the point where we quite literally fail to value them.

Nature can be like that. I try to stop on a regular basis and remind myself how lucky I am to live in this beautiful place, this beautiful province we call home. I try not to become blind to the beauty of the sea and of the fields and the sky and the beaches in this province.

I don't think I could say how much that means to me; how much it's worth. And some might cringe at the thought that we could place a sticker price on something like our forests or our water.

For instance, is a forest only worth something when it's converted into so many two-by-fours? And is the value of soil only measured in terms of its outputs? And what about water? We regard it as a free resource, to be sucked up, sprayed around, flushed away, the medium to wash our bodies, our

cars, our driveways, and the carrier of our waste. We take it for granted.

Some jurisdictions are trying to estimate the value of intact ecosystems, and how much it would cost them to replace the work that those ecosystems do, if we had to pay for it. The process is called 'natural asset valuation'.

For example, it has been estimated that the value of pollination services to the Canadian economy is about \$4 billion a year. That's billion with a B. And water. How much is an intact watershed worth? Again, I'm not talking simply about its aesthetic, its spiritual or its cultural value, which are incalculable, but the services that that water provides to our economy and our lives and all of those other species, who depend on it.

Part of me finds this whole idea quite crass, but not as crass as assuming it has no value at all and that pumping it for little economic gain is justified because it's free. I don't know the answer to my question: How much is it worth? But I do know that we need to have a proper conversation about it, and not start from the position that water is a free resource.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As we've recently heard, Health PEI is responsible for the delivery of health care in this province with a budget this year of in excess of \$696 million.

Resignation of Health PEI board

Question to the minister of health: Can you confirm why the board of Health PEI suddenly and unexpectedly resigned?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, it is unfortunate that as of yesterday afternoon, I did receive a written document from the chair of the Health PEI board stating that the entire board has chosen to step down. As I said, it is unfortunate and I am disappointed about that.

Obviously, last week there was a revision of the *Health Services Act* on the floor of the Legislature providing very clear roles for both the health board, myself, CEO, department and community engagement groups to try and enhance thoughts and vision from our two engagement committees.

Obviously, this is the approach that the board wants to take, but I do respect that. I do applaud them for the work they've done in the past on the health care system for Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, government introduced legislation to give the minister more power over the management of health here on PEI.

Less than a week later, the entire health board, appointed by this government, resigned.

Question to the minister of health: Do you see a connection between these two events?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, last week, we laid some new legislation down. It's a modernization of a piece of legislation that was almost 10 years old.

We've done jurisdictional scans of other provinces to see where they were in recent legislation. We've adopted, or mirrored legislation from other provinces.

I had meetings last week with the board on two occasions. One with the board chair and a member, and then with most of the board members on Thursday of last week.

Obviously, I did not anticipate that the board would step away. We talked about working collaboratively. We talked about strong vision for improvements in health care systems for all Islanders. I came away from that meeting feeling good last Thursday.

Yesterday's message caught me by surprise. It is unfortunate. I am disappointed, but I do thank the board for the work they've done in the past.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, while we were debating this bill in the Legislative Assembly, the minister is actually on record by saying that the Health PEI board supported these changes.

Now, this week, that board has resigned and former board members are telling the media that the minister's bill is the reason for their mass resignation.

Question to the minister of health: What changed over the long weekend that caused the entire board to suddenly and unexpectedly resigned en masse?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the changes that we were looking at with the *Health Services Act* last week, as I said, it is basically a mirror of other jurisdictions. And, might I say, larger jurisdictions that work and function well with the exact –

Mr. LaVie: Taking the fall.

Mr. Mitchell: – same piece of legislation. As I said, I was disappointed by the board's decision. I thought we had an opportunity to do a lot of great work together. I had that conversation and felt that I had their support on that. Obviously, they've had other discussions. They've chosen to go in another direction.

I applaud them for the work they've done. I

wish them well in whatever future endeavours they have, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Among the Health PEI board's duties are; employing the CEO; setting the strategic direction for Health PEI; monitoring executive and organizational performance; monitoring budget and quality and safety processes. Those are just a few of the key factors.

Trustee in place for Health PEI

Question to the minister of health: When will a trustee be in place now that your board has completely lost faith in you, your government and resigned on you en masse?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, under the provisions of the old act, which we are still working under, and, as well, the new act when it becomes acclaimed and a piece of law, there is a provision in there that in a case, such as this, a trustee can be appointed.

We are early days on this. I only received this letter of resignation last evening. I anticipate, over the coming days, in the next week, that we will have identified and have a trustee appointed to carry on and fulfill the work of the board. I have to maintain –

Mr. LaVie: Dodged a bullet.

Mr. Mitchell: – the role of the board was very clearly laid out under the new piece of legislation, with a lot of ample opportunity for doing great work to improve health care and health outcomes for Islanders.

I am disappointed that we aren't able to do that together. There are a lot of great Islanders with a lot of great, strong, solid backgrounds in Health PEI. I feel fully ensured that the new board will be developed from Islanders with great interest

in health care. We will get that work done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders, who watch this government dismantle the school boards will feel like they've seen this movie before. If you recall this movie ends in people getting run over by a bus.

Government failure in health care

Question to the minister of health: After 11 years of failure, why does your government now think it has all the answers when it comes to health care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the decision for the board to step away was not my decision. It was their decision. I want to make that clear. I had great meetings with them on a couple of occasions last week, I talked to them about my vision and was hoping that it would be their vision to work in cooperation with the department, with CEO, with members of the two engagement committees and all Islanders, to look at efficiencies, and look at development; new policies that will make a big difference in the lives of Islanders.

This was a decision that they made. I do support it. I am disappointed about it, but I am fully aware that there are a lot of individuals out there, on the two committees currently, with a lot of experience; a lot of background; quality individuals with a lot of talent that will, more than likely, step up and do a great role in this job, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci monsieur le president.*

Contrary to the government's current sunny ways propaganda blitz throughout the

current polling period, Prince Edward Island still have the lowest, average weekly wages in Canada, across the country.

Mr. Myers: Oh!

Lowest weekly wage in PEI

Mr. Trivers: Question to the finance minister: Can the Minister of Finance explain why some wages are lagging so far behind?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I assume the hon. member is talking about the overall average. You know, our government, since we have come to power in 2015, has raised –

Mr. Myers: 2007 (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – the –

Mr. Myers: – just to correct you.

Mr. MacDonald: – minimum –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. MacDonald: Raised the minimum wage. Working collaboratively with the chambers of commerce right across the province now, and have the highest minimum wage, likely, in Atlantic Canada, and we'll continue to build on that.

We look forward to more opportunities to bring those – the labour force. We know where that is. There are all kinds of benefits right now in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

If you read the most recent articles in the paper, in the *Financial Post*, and I know the hon. member from the third party doesn't like hearing this, but Prince Edward Island continues to be on a tear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, there is a big difference between our current minimum wage and what is a living wage on Prince Edward Island.

Certified early childhood educators in government licenced early years centres are paid between \$15.30 and \$17.22 per hour. These workers are an integral part of our education system. Indeed, they provide the foundation for our children.

Wages of early childhood educators

A question to the finance minister: Does the Minister of Finance believe these wages are fair, reasonable and representative of the value that early childhood educators add?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've made \$17 million in additional investments in the education of Islanders on Prince Edward Island. Part of that implementation was 400 child care spaces; part of that was child care subsidies; part of that was increasing the wage grid for those exact workers. And we said when we've done this, we're not done; we're not finished; we have more to do; and we'll continue to build on that. We had the highest growth of weekly wage increases in the first four months of this year at 3% right across Canada. So, we're doing well, but we have better things coming in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government's been in power for almost 11 years. They need to work a little faster. Over the last eight years, a one-time raise of 30 cents an hour is the only raise these educators have received. Eight years and only a single pay increase. Not even enough to come close to covering the increase in cost of living over that period.

Question to the finance minister: Why has this government taken no real action to fix these poor wages?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to go back to the last question and I'll note firstly that actually, the hon. member is talking about last year's wage grid which we have in this budget an increase to of 2%. We have said, and I said here on the floor in estimates that this is something that we would like to see improved more. In fact, it's something that we have indicated that we are working with the association to come up with a labour force study to determine what we can do to improve this.

Let me be very clear in saying this: These are private businesses that employ these folks and by and large, we do not actually regulate the better part of these early childhood educators in the Province of Prince Edward Island. If we say that we're going to bump up the wages for some of them, there's clearly going to be a group that end up being left behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance has just started advertising for clerks and managers for his new cannabis outlets. Clerks will make between \$18.70 and \$25.50 per hour.

Wages of cannabis clerks

A question to the finance minister: Why does selling cannabis pay so much better under your government than educating young children?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: They're making more now (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: That issue is like comparing apples to oranges, as far as I'm concerned. Anybody that thinks we're doing that in regard to the hon. member's comments, it's completely off. I think the hon. member of justice, actually, and education just explained why we have to be very careful not to run interference in effect of private business. But we'll continue to work on that wage grid and hopefully the private sector can continue to work on their wage grid and we can be compatible, so we don't put anybody in a position that they can't afford to hire people anymore because many of those workers are leaving for, maybe, government jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is important that government workers make a living wage – a wage that reflects the value they add; however, this government has chronically underfunded child educators' wages and now they're hiring pot clerks that will make up to \$8 an hour more.

Mr. Myers: Shameful.

Mr. Trivers: The minister really needs to stop trying to defend the indefensible. The directors of the early years centres are paid \$21.42 an hour – even less if they don't manage all aspects of the centres. The minister's new pot managers will earn between \$26 and \$36 an hour.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Trivers: This government and their system is broken.

Priorities of government misplaced

Question to the finance minister: Why are this government's priorities so misplaced?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will correct the hon. member – it would be \$21.85 on the new wage grid.

What we have indicated is that we do not pay these individuals. These individuals are employees of private businesses. We have regulated the wage grid for early childhood centres. They comprise or represent a portion of the population and we indicate to them that they will need to pay that amount.

Aside from that, there's a whole other group of private sector employers that employ these early childhood educators and we have worked with the industry over a long period of time to develop an expertise and a group of employees that we can be proud in and that educate our early childhood students much better than they had previously.

We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to work with them to improve wages for this group.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The month of June will soon be upon us – a busy time for weddings all across Prince Edward Island.

Promotion of PEI as wedding destination

Question to the tourism minister: How much will your department be spending this year to promote Prince Edward Island as a wedding destination?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tourism is an important component of the economy in PEI and we employ 7,700 full-time equivalents here in PEI. Visitors come for many reasons: they come for weddings; they come for beaches; they come on cruise ships; there's lots of reasons why visitors can come to PEI. 2017 was our fourth consecutive record for tourism in PEI and we reached over one million night stays.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Each year, Islanders and people from around the world get married on Prince Edward Island – some traveling great distances to take in our beautiful province.

PEI visitor's guide re: wedding destination

Question to the tourism minister: Can you explain why there wouldn't be a single ad in the visitors guide promoting Prince Edward Island as a wedding destination?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's lots of ways to advertise and there's private sector businesses here on PEI that provide wedding services and all the supports that go with that and they do tremendous business. They have lots of visitors come here every year because why wouldn't you want to come to PEI to get married? So we're happy to support those private sector businesses right across PEI and we encourage as many visitors as would like to come to PEI to come here this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year over 900 wedding ceremonies were performed on Prince Edward Island. Between the wedding party, family, and guests, they can become quite a large affair.

Tracking of info from off-Island travelers re: weddings

Question to the tourism minister: Does your department track any information about how many people from off-Island travel here to take part in weddings?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do track – just like a lot of the metrics in tourism that we track. We know overnight stays; we know we had 1.56 million visitors to PEI last year; we know there's 900 weddings in PEI; we continue to monitor those things and make investments in those so that we can continue to grow the economy. I can tell you, as a former tourism operator, I'm very happy with what the province is doing to continue to grow the economy and provide dollars into the local economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Weddings involve a lot of details and generate a lot of economic activity – most from small businesses and suppliers: the wedding venue, marriage commissioners, caterers, servers, accommodations, bridal wear, hospitality, musicians, photographers, and videographers, just to name a few.

Promotion of PEI as wedding destination (further)

Question to the tourism minister: Wouldn't promoting the Island as a wedding destination bolster these local small businesses in communities across the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to advertise PEI in a number of facets. Wedding is one of those. We don't do all of our advertising on PEI because luckily enough, everybody on PEI knows what a great product we have here. It's in other areas where we want people to come to PEI – where we have the focus of our advertising dollars. So we pick our strategic markets and that's where we do our advertising. There would be some various advertising mediums that Islanders wouldn't see, but certainly we are advertising right across the markets to encourage visitation to PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some have estimated that the value of the wedding industry on Prince Edward Island to be as much as \$10 million annually. The province routinely runs targeted promotions for tourism sectors like golf, culinary, and other areas because they have an economic impact. The wedding sector seems tailor made to benefit from this approach.

Promotional dollars for wedding industry

Question to the tourism minister: Will you commit to putting some marketing and promotional dollars behind Prince Edward Island's growing wedding industry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the wedding industry is growing and we continue to evaluate all of the sectors that generate a return –

Mr. MacKay: You just (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – to PEI. So we continue to do that, and we'll monitor that again this year, like we do every year, as part of continual business growth that will help us to measure our contribution of \$447 million to the provincial economy –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – every year that comes from tourism.

We'll continue to do that and we'll make strategic investments that have pay offs and we know that there's wedding –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – venues that are fully booked for the summer, so we know that there's a lot of success in there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: A million room nights.

Speaker: The hon. Member –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Sherwood Motel.

Speaker: – from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Electoral System Referendum Act* has a long list of requirements for the eligibility for a registered referendum advertiser. One of those is that the organization being not for profit. Now, the minister of justice and I both know that from a legal perspective, if you were calling your organization a not-for profit, it means that the organization is incorporated under provincial or federal not for profit statute.

Referendum advertiser: legally incorporated non-profit

A question to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety: Is it your intent that any registered referendum advertiser be legally incorporated as a not for profit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The first thing I'd say is when we get this bill on the floor, we'll have a fulsome conversation about this and I don't think I'd want to get too far out in front of that. But, I do anticipate in the way that we have drafted the bill, would be to indicate that if there's a group of people that are together and their purpose of being together is a not for profit going concern, then we would see them work together to form the purposes of a proponent or opponent group.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary.

Costs and time to incorporate a non-profit

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the same minister, as the minister responsible for incorporations as well as a former private sector lawyer who has no doubt been hired to facilitate incorporations for not for profits, could you let the House know the estimated cost and time required to incorporate a not for profit, including obtaining a name search report, preparing letters, patented, drafting bylaws, setting up a board of directors and obtaining liability insurance?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) legal document.

Mr. Myers: Depends if you have a good lawyer or not (Indistinct) asking the wrong guy.

Mr. R. Brown: \$100.

Mr. Myers: \$100?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: For a lawyer like Jordan, \$100.

Speaker: Okay members, we're in the middle of Question Period now so let's listen to the questions and the answers.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the benefit of this House, and I guess given that I'm not in private sector practice anymore, I can say this and not expect a stampede: I often did them and donated my services (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: Even better than 100 bucks.

[Laughter]

Mr. J. Brown: There was a disbursement, I believe, of \$250.

But, to be clear, we are saying that if there's a group of people that are together, we wouldn't necessarily require them to be incorporated. We'll start from that position and we'll see where the debate takes us.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your second supplementary.

Ms. Bell: I appreciate the clarification and I look forward to what your phone bill is going to look like afterwards.

I appreciate the minister recognizing that there is a fee that must be paid, regardless of whether it's paid to the lawyer; however, thank you for clarifying that it may not require incorporation. However, one of the great advantages of incorporating is that it allows not for profits to purchase director's liability insurance which they cannot purchase as individuals.

Fines for infractions re: incorporation legislation

If one of these organizations was your client when you were working in the private sector, would you in good conscience advise them to forgo incorporation and take on the risk of being personally liable for the fines of up to \$10,000 per infraction that are stated in this legislation if they make a minor error?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

If we want to get right down to the detail of this question, what I would have to say would be that whether they're incorporated or whether they're not, there is an ability for the directors of a corporation to be held personally liable. You always have to be careful of that and it just depends on what exactly you are asking in terms of the advice that you might seek.

As far as that goes, I would expect that the same ability to obtain insurance would be available to folks in their own right, whether they are acting through a corporation or whether they're acting personally. So, everybody always needs to be aware of what they're getting themselves into. The legislation that we have put together, I think, does a good job to contemplate the potential issues that we might be into, and I look very

much forward to getting it to the floor to have a great debate.

We have addressed the opposition caucuses in terms of our willingness to do that and we are very open to a debate on this legislation and I look forward to the opportunity to get there, and we hope that will come soon.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

In government's 2018-2019 budget, 100 new beds were announced for long-term care facilities on PEI.

Location of new long-term care beds

Minister, where will these beds be located and if so, how many are in Western PEI?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) Charlottetown.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a government, we are investing in significant supports for our Island seniors and that is part of our \$32.5 million of new investment in the health budget this year.

Currently, we are reviewing our long-term care needs across our province. Geographically, it may be a little bit early to determine, hon. member, because we do have to look at things such as areas of greatest need. We need to look at where our population growth is perceived to be occurring.

We also need to look at what type of beds are required. Are they dementia beds or are they the level four and five? We are working on that process. In the very near future we'll be putting our RFPs to the private sector to determine what kind of capacity and desire they have to provide the 50 beds. But, we have certainly committed to 50 new long-term care beds this fiscal, and an additional

50 next year on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring I questioned the then Minister of Health and Wellness about his department and if they would be adding more beds to the existing manor facilities in Prince Edward Island. He said that his department, and more specifically the seniors' policy analysis, would look into it.

Demand for long-term beds

Minister, are these 100 beds enough to meet the demand of our long-term bed need?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, at the present time we have in the vicinity of 1,140 long-term care beds on Prince Edward Island. We feel the addition of an additional 100 over the next two fiscals; that will provide very manageable and sustainable patient flow from our long-term care facilities, from homes, from hospitals.

As I mentioned earlier, we are doing that comprehensive long-term care review at the moment, but there are other things that we would like to additionally look at as well when we make these investments in providing that extra care for seniors, whether it be community care, whether it be home care, whether it be respite care, palliative programs, or other supports that may be required. We are still working on that review, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, these long-term beds at various facilities, they aid hospitals tremendously by alleviating some of the added pressures that they have. Western PEI has a need for more beds. It's plain and simple.

Long-term care bed shortage in Western PEI

Minister, what is your department doing to deal with the long-term bed shortage in Western PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it would go without saying that there are needs for long-term care beds right across our province, in the west, in the east, in the central region. We are working to identify that, and with the new influx of 100 beds over the next two fiscals, we definitely see that the bed requirements will be met in all ends of the province. But, the review will show where they are needed.

The reviews will show where private sector can come to the table to help us with capacity and desire to be part of this. All of Prince Edward Island will be dealt with, with the new long-term care beds.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Update on adoption review act

My question today is for the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, there has been a renewed interest and public discussion on the opening of adoption records. Will you give an update on your adoption review act?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for that question, hon. member. Public attitudes around adoption are changing. We are hearing every day about Islanders, who are interested in having those adoption records opened.

A couple of weeks ago, there was a beautiful story, actually, on CBC's *Atlantic Voice* by Kerry Campbell; it was the story of a mother and daughter, who had been searching for 28

years for one another, and who were reunited.

We are very cognizant of the stories out there. We are very cognizant of the sensitivity around this issue. We are also committed to hearing all sides of the stories because we must balance the rights of all three parties in adoption, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I understand that you have done some consultations around the Island. What did you hear from Islanders on the adoption review act?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, hon. member, we did have consultations that took place, beginning in February, concluding in March. We went out and we met with our community partners. We met with Indigenous peoples. We had public and private meetings. We had stakeholder meetings. We heard from all three sides to this issue.

We have an advisory committee that is now compiling what they heard into a report, which they will be delivering to my department later on this summer. We are looking at, hopefully, rolling that out sometime this summer, as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary question.

Ms. Casey: I'm done, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Oh, you're done.

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: You announced that last week.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last fall, our caucus raised the issue of a project that would see Northern Pulp pump 75 to 90 million litres of pulp waste a day from the Pictou County plant into the Northumberland Strait, and the concerns that many had around this potential environmental impact.

In January the Premier wrote to the premier of Nova Scotia, and the federal environment minister on this issue.

Response of letter to premier of Nova Scotia

Premier: What response did you receive to those letters?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I did hear back from the premier of Nova Scotia to indicate that Nova Scotia, contrary to the specific requests that had been made in my January letter would proceed with the 30-day environmental review and that was announced publicly.

The request of the federal minister has been acknowledged, but there has not been a response one way or the other but I remain hopeful that there will be a federal environmental review.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This project has raised major concerns among the fishers in three provinces, all three provinces; among Indigenous communities; environmental groups and others.

Direct talks with premier McNeil and federal minister

Question to the Premier: Have you had direct talks with premier McNeil or the federal minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I did speak with premier McNeil in the first part of April, well, more like April 20th. I have not had direct discussion with the federal minister, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In February, Northern Pulp was here. A number of the MLAs were here. There were questions from all parties about the concern that we have about this project and the potential impact, both to the environment and to the economic impact of the province.

Direct talks with Northern Pulp re: project

Question to the Premier: Have you had any direct talks with Northern Pulp about the project?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, Northern Pulp is well aware of the concerns that we raised publicly, and that we raised in solidarity with the PEI Fishermen's Association and others.

In January, the Fishermen's Association signaled at the time that they appreciated that intervention.

Let me say, that we said, very clearly, in the letter to Nova Scotia and to the federal minister that we do not support the project as proposed and to be more further specific about that; we are concerned about both the effluent and the water temperature of what is proposed to be done on that project. We would not be prepared to change that view without a full environmental review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Pulp's corporate history leaves many, on both sides of the Strait nervous.

In 2014, the federal government fined Northern Pulp \$225,000 for *Fisheries Act* violations when 47 million litres of untreated pulp and paper effluent spilled into Pictou County harbour.

This violation of federal law landed Northern Pulp on the national Environmental Offenders Registry.

Full federal environmental impact assessment

Question to the Premier: Doesn't this history make it even more important that a full federal environmental impact assessment happen for this project?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, in response to the previous question (Indistinct) very clear: we have called for a full federal environmental assessment, and for enforcement of federal standards that pertain to this sort of activity or discharge.

That is something that we're very firm about. Our Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has been very active on this file. Our environmental people are very active on this file. We have been very, very supportive and worked together with, in particular, the Fishermen's Association, to ensure that these concerns are being brought to the attention of everyone concerned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the Premier's answer, but we will keep pushing because this is far from over –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) resolution.

Ms. Compton: – fisheries' groups across the Maritimes have joined cause over the Northern Pulp project, including the PEI Fishermen's Association. These groups have retained legal counsel and environmental consultants.

Legal and technical expertise re: project

Question to the Premier: Has the province retained any legal or technical expertise for advice on this project?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have been working with our counsel and our officials within government; folks in the departments of both agriculture and fisheries and communities, land and environment, who are well aware of the federal regulations and standards and the environmental review process that would pertain.

We've been very direct in relaying that request, a specific request and our concerns. I can say that we appreciate the collaboration of members opposite in sharing those concerns and indeed, in the proceeding that took place here in this Chamber earlier this year. We should be looking for every opportunity to keep promoting our concern and seeking a resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many people are concerned, as we both stated, both sides of the floor here. We know there is going to be a less rigorous review, is what we're told by the Nova Scotia government.

I'm concerned and we're all concerned that the fix is in here. Recently, it was reported that the Nova Scotia government and Northern Pulp are negotiating a cost-sharing deal for the project before we even know what the project is going to be.

Confidence in environmental review process

How much confidence should Islanders have in the environmental review process if the parties are already negotiating a funding deal for the project?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think we should all be using what opportunities we have and what resources we have to encourage a federal environmental assessment of this matter and my own view is that given where that pipe is meant to be releasing that effluent, that that's something that should be considered to be in federal jurisdiction; that is releasing effluent.

I'll say again: We should always be alert to the temperature of the water. You know, Mr. Speaker, as a former lobster fisher, that the temperature of the water on the bottom is a very important factor, whether it's in the lobster fishery, or other shellfish, or other aspects of the long-term condition of that ecosystem and we should be very, very concerned and we should be wishing and expecting that the federal government will recognize the jurisdiction in this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everyone in this House knows that there are many people who rely on the Northumberland Strait and the fishing industry in the Strait for their livelihood. They've been quite clear about how they feel about this. No pipe in the Strait.

Northern Pulp pipe in Northumberland Strait

Premier: What is this government – your government willing to do to ensure there is no pipe in the Strait?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me say that we totally concur in the way that this matter is being raised in terms of its economic importance. Let me underscore the ecological consideration and concern

that we should also attach to this issue: for the fish, for the environment, for all of the ways in which that system is interconnected and ultimately have harm to Prince Edward Island – that Northumberland Strait is not very wide and everything is connected and I'll confirm – and I know our ministers would also confirm – that we will do everything in our power to ensure that there is a full and proper environmental assessment of this initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Leader of the Opposition: Let's pass a resolution.

Recognition of Guests (II)

Speaker: I will give way to the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford for recognition.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to recognize someone who came in late here, F.D. MacDonald. I was going to say he's an old friend of mine, but he's actually a young friend I've known for a long, long time.

I also want to recognize Cindy Midgley – she and her family and her parents – good friends of ours – and they are seen at the farmer's market on a regular basis, so I just want to welcome them to the gallery as well.

Statements by Ministers

Renewing Diabetes Strategy

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body either cannot produce insulin or cannot properly use the insulin it produces.

Insulin is important as it controls the amount of glucose – or sugar – in the blood. The body needs insulin to use sugar as an energy source. Not being able to regulate the amount of sugar in the blood can damage organs, blood vessels, and nerves. Diabetes affects 11 million Canadians. On PEI,

approximately 15,000 Islanders are living with diabetes.

Adopting the first-ever provincial diabetes strategy in 2014 was a huge step forward in helping Islanders manage their diabetes and improve their quality of life. Of the 23 goals outlined in the 2014-2017 strategy, 22 have been implemented or are in progress.

Some of the more recent investments in diabetes care include: Hiring a full-time permanent nurse practitioner to support Islanders with complex diabetes cases and those without a dedicated primary care provider; expanding coverage of blood glucose test strips for insulin-dependent women during pregnancy; partnering with Island optometrists to deliver province-wide access to diabetic retinopathy testing; establishing an insulin pump program for children and youth; establishing the NutriSTEP Screening Program to assist with early identification of overweight/obese children and implement early intervention strategies; implementing the Canadian CANRISK tool to determine risk for developing diabetes; and adding new medications for diabetes management to the Provincial Pharmacare Formulary.

Since the PEI Diabetes Strategy was released in April, 2014, more than 7,500 Islanders have accessed services offered.

Over the coming months, Health PEI will be working toward renewing the provincial diabetes strategy, which will be released by the end of this year.

To help inform the new multi-year strategy, we are holding four focus group sessions from June 5th to June 13th in Montague, Charlottetown, Summerside and O'Leary for Islanders living with diabetes.

Islanders interested in participating in one of these sessions are asked to preregister by calling Provincial Diabetes Program, toll-free at 1-888-854-7244.

It is important for Islanders to share their experiences as we work towards renewing the strategy and our commitment to ensuring that Islanders have access to the necessary services and supports that best meet their needs.

Health PEI will evaluate the previous diabetes strategy, reviewing the initiatives implemented over the past three years to address the key areas of prevention, early detection and diabetes management.

We have made tremendous progress in establishing formal diabetes programs and services that are continuously evolving to meet the needs of Islanders living with diabetes. I encourage all Islanders living with diabetes to attend one of the upcoming focus group sessions.

I also want to thank our health care professionals, who are leading an important piece of work that will shape diabetes care in our province ensuring programs and services are meeting the needs of Islanders and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear that this strategy will be expanded and continued into the future. Thank you to the minister for the statement. I also encourage all those involved to get out, and especially just to even understand it first, but also get out to these meetings. We know that an expanded coverage of the insulin pumps, diabetic strips, all of these things will help.

The big thing, of course, is the early intervention so that we don't have the long-term financial hardships for our health care system. The earlier we help people with diabetes in our system, it's going to help in our long-term without a doubt.

I know the diabetes association talks about some of the struggles that families are having with incomplete insurance coverage or just the general cost that costs thousands and thousands of dollars to deal with families with all types of diabetes, really.

We all have personal stories in our communities, our friends that are dealing with it, the late nights, the constant worrying about getting kids up and all of that.

I encourage the minister to think long-term with this strategy and also encourage all those people to get out to these consultations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the minister's statement. As he said, the three-year diabetes strategy expired in 2017, and we're in this, sort of, area in between before the new strategy is announced. I hope – Diabetes Canada made some recommendations about how we should not just renew this diabetes strategy, but actually expand it.

When it comes to things like insulin pumps, all the other Atlantic Provinces, anybody under 25 years of age, not 18, so I hope that's going to be taken into consideration here. A strategy in the schools to support and manage children who are coping with type 1 diabetes, again that's something I think we really need here.

On the proactive front, my hon. colleague there talked about how important when it comes to diabetes, prevention is. I mean, there are so many diseases where you have no choice, but simply to come at in a reactive manner. When it comes to type 2 diabetes, it is entirely preventable in almost all cases. If we were to have programs in our schools, which more – and I recognize, minister, that we are doing this, but I think this is an area where prevention really could be bolstered quite significantly.

I think more help for women with gestational diabetes, as well. You mentioned that. There are a number of ways in which this program is really important to those 50,000 Islanders, who are suffering from diabetes. I do hope that in the future the program will expand to include those things that I just mentioned, and those things that are endorsed by Diabetes Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Reading Town Week

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to proclaim this week, May 19th to May 26th, Reading Town Week on Prince Edward Island.

We are pleased to have some of the Reading Town folks with us in the gallery here today. I would like to recognize Cindy Midgley; Barb Kissick, and Lori Cheverie from the Bookmark.

Reading Town is a project of the National Reading Campaign, which encourages Canadians to read and enjoy the many benefits of reading. This is the fourth annual Reading Town Week on Prince Edward Island and there are many events planned.

On Thursday, Heather Moyse will be at the Bookmark from 11:30 to 1:30, signing her new book, *Redefining 'Realistic'*. She will be doing readings Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m. at Receiver Coffee at the PEI Writers' Guild Open Mic event.

Also, Thursday evening from 7:00 to 9:00 at the Carriage House, Katherine Dewar will be signing her new book *Called To Serve*, a biography of the Summerside military heroine Georgina Pope.

There will be a story time for children Saturday morning at 10:00 in the Charlottetown Mall. That evening, we will celebrate our great Island authors at the Cox & Palmer Island Literary Awards and the PEI Book Awards.

Many other Reading Town events are scheduled throughout the year, including the launch of Judy Gaudet's poetry anthology, *Canada's History in Poems*. This launch will be held June 7th at the Carriage House where 20 Island poets and historians will read a poem from the book.

I would like to thank the Reading Town folks for the books they've left for MLAs, including; Robert McFarlane's *The Gift of Reading* and the TD Children's Book for 2018 *Good Morning, Canada* by Andrea Lynn Beck. I know what I'll be reading to my kids tonight before they go to bed.

I'm sure, they will be put to very good use. Any week is a great week for reading, but this is a special one for Island readers. I encourage you to take part in the many great activities that are planned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the staff here from the Bookmark today. I think celebrating the impact and value of local bookstores in our community, that aren't just places where we can buy books, but also where we can love and honour books, whether it's books that have come from independent local publishers and that celebrate local Islanders and writers. Whether it's also things like great art supplies and stationary and just that magical thing that happens when you have a child, who discovers the love of reading, or an adult, who rediscovers the love of reading.

Our libraries also provide that opportunity, including our tiny lending libraries that are around the town as part of the long-term project of Reading Town. And some creative programming that happens at places like the Bookmark, and at our local libraries where we've discovered recently, things like being able to borrow a telescope, take seeds from the lending library. We've met a drag queen and a falcon, all as part of the library programming.

There is a great quote that I wanted to share that actually comes from the Bookmark website.

It says, "Books never really end. They stay with you, good or bad, and can float into your mind quite without warning... Books take root. A book alters you, only in a minor way and sometimes fleetingly, but you're never completely the same when you've finished as you were on page one."

It's from Daniel Gray. It's something, I think, that's really important.

Thank you so much for this great initiative. In whatever way we can encourage people

to value and share that storytelling. It's great to see the staff here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the jurisdictional scan that was used in preparation of Bill No. 114, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the research that was done in preparation for Bill No. 114 *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the emails and letters that I've received from people across Prince Edward Island from students and classes with reference to Bill No. 114 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document received from Erin McGrath-Gaudet of CFIB with respect to a survey that was completed with a CFIB survey and businesses across Prince Edward Island and the results of that survey and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness, I beg leave to introduce a report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: Thank you.

Introduction of Government Bills
Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, that the 16th Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 16, *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act*, Bill No. 37, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of

the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and Deputy Speaker to continue with the chairing of this bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: I think hon. members, permission to bring a stranger to the floor first?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Mr. Myers: He's no stranger. He's here every day now.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: Even when he's not here, he's here.

Chair: We'll allow our stranger to introduce himself and then we'll chat.

Gary Demeulenaere Director: Gary Demeulenaere, Director of Legal and Policy Services in Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Great, thank you.

Hon. members, as you'll recall in our discussions yesterday, we passed this bill with the exception of one section where the hon. Leader of the Third Party was maybe going to take it away and maybe propose an amendment?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Just before we do that, minister, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr. J. Brown: No. I have the hon. Leader of the Third Party's proposed amendment and I'm fine with it in principle. I think he's got copies to hand around to everybody.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, while the amendment is being passed out, I'm going to give the floor to the Leader of the Third Party to talk about the amendment.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Before we get going, again, I want to reiterate my support for this bill and the work that the minister has done to bring it forward, and I know I mentioned that yesterday, but it's important that you know that I'm in support of the bill and what it's trying to achieve.

The amendment, of course this all happened within the last 24 hours so doing a full jurisdictional scan was a bit challenging. However, we did look at other provinces across the country and there are varying approaches to clarifying the issue of residency. Many provinces have a similar approach to what we have in the original bill here, bill 37. Some have much more restrictive descriptions of what 'residency' is, and the tightest of all is in Quebec.

Now, because of the timeframe involved in preparing this amendment, I looked at a couple of things. We looked at the most recent province to amend or update their residency requirements and that was British Columbia. But, they used a fairly complex update and it would have required other amendments to the act. It would have been affects on other parts of the act so we didn't go with that and perhaps we looked for the simplest and the easiest to adopt, the least controversial, that would allow for a little bit of tightening of the description of what 'residency' is, and that would allow, also, for the discretion of an independent body to decide whether somebody was indeed a resident and this is how they do in Manitoba.

I thought this is something we could incorporate into this act without any implications for any other aspects of the act and that it would give that independent body an opportunity for discretion to be applied in any areas where there was a controversy.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

I will say I am completely fine with the amendment that's there. I would just note, in the way it's gone around, I think the intent is to have this added on – and it reads correctly, just the one and the sub one in the margin, I don't think should be there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: So I note that.

The other piece I want to add, just for completeness of the record here is that our intent in bringing this forward – and I would think my intent would remain unaltered, and I say this as much to note that we have had disputes over this with Elections Prince Edward Island and Elections Canada, that I'm aware of in the past, and that is that it not be overly onerous to establish that you're a resident for the purposes of a donation; that people generally with a well-informed intent not have to jump through too many hoops to establish that they are a resident.

That all aside, if everybody is accepting of that, certainly I feel that this is a fine amendment in my view.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment has a question.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you.

Chair: On the amendment.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: The Harper government made restrictions to the election's act in Ottawa that disenfranchised many, many Canadians from voting. Where Ottawa is putting through amendments now to reverse this disenfranchisement of people from voting: homeless people or people that don't have an address.

Can you assure me that this definition will not be used during the election to determine people going to a polling station to vote? Because I believe they were times for democracy when Harper administration put in (Indistinct) restrictions for people from voting: IDs, addresses, electric bills, telephone bills and everything like that. I have constituents that don't have phone bills or electric bills. I have concern about disenfranchising Canadians from voting in an election. Can you assure me that this definition that the Chief Electoral Officer comes up with will not be used during the election?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes, so this is only in relation to election expenses, to be clear. It has nothing to do with voting. There's a separate definition in the *Election Act*. We're not changing that.

But I will say that, essentially what you are saying is an extension of what I was saying a few minutes ago, that – and I think the conversation we're having here would clearly colour whatever the Chief Electoral Officer would determine in the guidelines that they're establishing. I think we would be saying this all recognizing the intent of what we're doing, that people that have an honest intention to be here in the province – we discussed somebody that has a cottage here and might come for the summer, or whatever, well, that's not an honest intention in my view of being a resident of Prince Edward Island. It's somebody that has their permanent home here that comes back – they would say that's home. As I said yesterday, I think Islanders have a pretty good sense of what that is to them and I think there are different ways we can establish that, but, I think the intent is the key piece – that they have a home that they return to and that's what we look to.

Mr. R. Brown: Can this be changed then: For the purpose of section 11, the Chief Electoral Officer may establish guidelines to determine whether a person is an ordinary resident in the province. And this section only applies – does not apply to the *Election Act*.

Mr. J. Brown: No. Just two expenses – a different legislation.

Mr. R. Brown: No, but the guidelines – here is my problem: You have the *Elections Expenses Act*, he comes up with a set of guidelines that is says: you need your birth certificate, you need your Maritime Electric bill, you need your IslandTel bill– we don't have IslandTel any more, I guess, but we have all these. A rightful person that has the right to vote in this Canada goes into an election station to vote and he can affirm or swear to being a resident of the district he is voting in. This will have no effect on that. I don't want it being said in the next election – somebody goes into to vote and they're said: You don't have an ID? You don't have a health card? Sorry, get out of here. I want to make sure that every individual that wants to vote – that wants to affirm or swear that they're a resident can vote.

Mr. J. Brown: I totally hear what you are saying – what I'm saying– you said in much more flowery language what I was saying yesterday, was that we don't want to get too technical about this. And I think the Chief Electoral Officer would be well advised to take what's being said here into consideration when guidelines are being prepared.

But I think it is fair that we could say that the Chief Electoral Officer in their discretion has got the ability to make those guidelines and if we feel that there's a problem with them, frankly, I think we can come back in here and further clarify what would need to be there.

But, to be absolutely clear, there is a totally different section in – there are actually three sections in the *Election Act* that dictates who can vote and from is a whole piece of that tied to what district you live in, and all that kind of thing. And then even within that, it's my understanding that there's some power for the Chief Electoral Officer to exercise some discretion through guidelines or a policy or whatever.

This, to be clear, is different. This, to be clear, is less stringent than what would currently be in the *Election Act*. In other words, it would be easier, I think, to establish that your intent is it that your residence is in one spot or another, pursuant to this definition, than what's currently in the *Election Act*. But this wording is pulled

out of – the intent is similar and this is pulled out of the *Election Act*.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, speaking to the amendment.

Ms. Biggar: Correct.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

My only concern is that normally when you change a definition in one act; it does have repercussions in other acts. I know I've had to deal with my own department in that regard. So this – this is my concern that at the discretion of Elections PEI, that they can change this definition, so in my opinion – and you're the lawyer, but in my opinion – that could have a domino effect that – Oh, we changed that in this act, so now we have to change it in the other act. So that's my concern.

And I'm just curious if the Leader of the Third Party has a sample definition that he might have put together for discussion with Elections PEI?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The answer is no. This is not about a definition. This is just adding a clause to allow the Chief Electoral Officer discretion on who is eligible or not to make a contribution. It's got absolutely nothing to do with voting, community, land and environment – just to be clear on that. The conditions, the criteria here for people being able to make a contribution is purely and solely and entirely separate from that and just related to those who can make contributions.

But you know what? I'm not going to push this. If people have concerns about this, I am perfectly willing to withdraw it. I didn't mean this to be a lengthy, drawn-out conversation.

Ms. Biggar: That's my concern.

Chair: The hon. Premier, speaking to the amendment.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, yesterday, the Leader of the Third Party, when he raised this issue, said that is the definition in section 11.1 is loose. And I wouldn't use that language. It's simple.

It says: you live in Prince Edward Island, to the exclusion of anywhere else. And that's, in effect, the combination of 11.1(1) and 11.1(2) says that.

When we come to this, let's recall that this is in a bill that puts a cap on contributions – restricts it to individuals. And both of which are being done for the first time in the province, and restricts it to people who are ordinarily resident in the province. And, to my mind, I'm not sure that as we embark on what is historic path for our province, that we should complicate it – because there are lots of different ways of talking about residence: There's a resident for the income tax; there's a resident for which district to vote or which polling station; there's a resident for land ownership, et cetera.

I read 11.1 and I know it is drawn from section 22, I believe, of the *Election Act*, as being a straight forward approach that – it doesn't really leave much room for interpretation. You either live here or you live somewhere else.

And I'd be inclined to think we'd be better to push this boat away from the dock and find out if we encounter any problems out there. I think section 11.1 is pretty clear in its intent, which is; if you're not ordinarily resident in Prince Edward Island, keep your cheque book in your pocket.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I don't expect that we are going to suddenly be overwhelmed – an appropriate word, I think, given the Premier's analogy there or metaphor – with a sudden rush of off-Island contributions. I think in previous years, it's averaged about 10% and most of those were corporate and, of course, they are not going to be allowed under the act anyway.

So I started this discussion yesterday just as a point of discussion. It was actually Gary, who suggested that, perhaps, I wanted to bring an amendment here, which is why we're here.

I'm perfectly happy to withdraw this if there are concerns. I think the bill itself is really strong, I was just trying to make it even stronger. I'm fine, I'm not –

Chair: You're willing to withdraw –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – (Indistinct) I am –

Chair: – because of the concerns.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – I am.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, the amendment has been withdrawn.

Mr. Roach: Carry the bill.

Chair: Do I have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, the bill yesterday was carried. Do we have a question?

Mr. R. Brown: Question.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: Ready – thank you.

All those in favour of the bill, signify by saying 'aye.'

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary minded.

Motion is carried and it is unanimous.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) the big money.

Mr. J. Brown: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. J. Brown: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. J. Brown: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No.1, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, we're on page 78 of the Department of Finance. Is it the wish that I read it line by line.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, (Indistinct) section by section –

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: – is fine. If you just give the –

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: – section title and the total.

Chair: Thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow her to come in and get set-up.

Good afternoon, could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: It's Vicki Hamilton, CFO for the Department of Finance.

Chair: Welcome.

Hon. members, there are three handouts to be circulated.

Would you like me to continue while the handouts are being circulated?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Administration

General

Total General: 486,100.

Shall the –

An Hon. Member: Carry.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to ask a question about revenue. I know that that appears in the preceding pages. I hope you'll allow me to ask it in the administration portion here.

It's about whether you have and if so, how much have you budgeted to get from a carbon tax, carbon pricing?

Mr. MacDonald: Go ahead.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: We have the excised tax component of carbon budgeted at \$623,000.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Six twenty-three. Just to check, that's for this calendar year, this fiscal year?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: For this fiscal, yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And that's revenue?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Just to be clear, that's the total amount of revenue that you anticipate the province collecting from carbon taxation in this fiscal year?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That's the excise component.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: The HST related to any sales would be built into the HST number.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: Hon. members, if we could keep it down just a bit so we can hear the question and the response. I'd appreciate it.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I know we had the climate change strategy just released last week and there was no detailing on what carbon pricing would be.

Is that why we don't see a budget line here; an item line for any revenue coming from carbon taxation or pricing?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, that's fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Debt and Investment Management

Total Debt and Investment Management:
518,400.

Shall the section – the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

How much money are you putting into sinking funds in this upcoming fiscal year?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: We're no longer putting any money into sinking funds.

Mr. Trivers: Can you explain why?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Yeah. That falls under a different section, but I can –

Chair: (Indistinct)

Vicki Hamilton CFO: – it falls under interest charges on debt, not this particular section –

Mr. Trivers: Oh, pardon me. Yes, continue –

Chair: Can you hold that for –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Chair: – for that section?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, continue. Yeah.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Pensions and Benefits

Total Pensions and Benefits –

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: Sorry?

Mr. Trivers: Are you sure that this wasn't the debt and investment management section?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Further on in the budget book there's the actual interest charges on debt section. That's where all the interest costs. This section, the debt and investment section is just the resources to manage debt and the funds of the province.

Chair: Are you okay?

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Total Pensions and Benefits: 1,301,200.

Mr. Myers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

How many people do you have working in pensions and benefits now?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: We have 16 fulltime positions.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

In pensions and benefits, who have you had in over the past three years on a contract basis?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: There's no actual professional services costs within this section. The professional services cost associated to the funds actually are paid for by the funds themselves, and not through this section.

Mr. Myers: Is Morneau Shepell still one of the companies that manages (Indistinct)

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Yes, it is.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: Does Wes Sheridan have any relation to the provincial pension program through Morneau Shepell.

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I know he's been around your office so he hasn't been around to do – he's just giving you advice?

Mr. MacDonald: He's not giving me advice.

Mr. Myers: But when Wes Sheridan is in your office, he's not consulting on pensions?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Myers: What would Wes be there for then?

Mr. MacDonald: I believe the last time Wes was in my office, I walked up the hall and he was in visiting his old staff.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

So Wes makes regular appearance in your office?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Myers: So you can confirm to this house that Wes Sheridan isn't being paid to do any work on behalf of the Province Prince Edward Island?

Mr. MacDonald: As far as I'm concerned, I've never seen his name across my desk.

Mr. Myers: And there is no connect back through Morneau Shepell to Wes Sheridan?

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Myers: Is Wes still at Morneau Shepell?

Mr. MacDonald: I have no idea.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry?

Mr. Myers: No, I have more questions.

Chair: Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) Morneau.

Mr. Myers: When he was in your office, you didn't ask him what he was doing.

Mr. MacDonald: No. I don't know the man, actually.

Mr. Myers: I heard he was in giving you advice on pensions and that's why I'm asking. I know Wes got us into a lot of trouble with the way he managed the pensions here in Prince Edward Island under his watch, so I wanted to be sure that the advice he was giving you wasn't the advice that you were using.

Mr. MacDonald: I think I already answered you. He wasn't giving me advice and your source is very poor, because he hasn't talked to me in regard to any sort of pensions.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Minister, you probably recall previously in this session back in one of the earlier Question Periods, we were talking about – or I was asking about different ways of raising money to cover off our debt and trying to let Islanders hold more of the debt locally so that when we paid interest, more of it would stay on the Island.

You had mentioned that you thought to provide the sort of instrument to allow that, the administrative overhead would be too much. I was wondering, given the fact that we have resources here hired in the Department of Finance that do look at debt and investment management and other things, why that would be the case.

Mr. MacDonald: Do you want to just explain that a little further?

Mr. Trivers: What I was asking about was the ability for Islanders to purchase an instrument, like a bond type, where they would be able to hold the debt of the province and the interest being paid, instead of going to these syndicates that the Auditor General named, one of these seven syndicates and the investors that could be anywhere in the world, then presumably the interest being paid – Islanders – a lot of it, hopefully, would stay in the Island economy.

But you had said you thought it might be prohibitive to manage – the administrative cost of managing those instruments would be too (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, I think most provinces have gone away from the bonds due to the administration cost and also, you have to be very aware of the fluctuation and interest rates in regards to bonds.

Working with those syndicates, which every province does, obviously, we're very secure in our investments and I think that's the route that the province has chosen to go.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just a little confused as to why the administrative costs would be too much just because – I mean, you actually have employees that are dedicated to things like debt and investment management.

Do you have an estimate of the number of additional people you would have to hire to manage that? Why is it prohibitive, I guess?

Mr. MacDonald: We actually have, dedicated to that, there is actually four staff. So, it's –

Mr. Trivers: So, you do have the resources then to manage provincial bonds?

Mr. MacDonald: No. They're worked right now to full extent, as far as I'm concerned as a minister.

Mr. Trivers: And you mentioned the interest rates and the fluctuations and these syndicates you deal with, but I'm thinking if I'm especially an Islander that's approaching retirement or in retirement, if I could get a bond at something higher than a GIC, I would consider it, and it seems to me that would be very secure. I've seen the

interest rates that our current long-term debt is out at, the debentures, and really, I think if you're in that 3-4% range, it would be very competitive and given the fact that the money would be staying in the Island economy and the spinoff effects and everything, it just seems to me that it should be something you should be giving some really serious consideration to.

Mr. MacDonald: I think on the other hand, too, you have all of your financial institutions doing bonds now so we'd be, as a government, competing against the financial institutions. I'm not sure where the win would be for us. If it's going to cost us an administration, it's obviously going to put the price up, so they can do it a lot cheaper and likely a lot better than we can.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: As the banks buy our bond, then that becomes part of their mutual fund mix. So in fact, Islanders can purchase, as part of their mix, a PEI bond.

Mr. Trivers: Maybe you're missing the point of what I'm saying and maybe you can explain it to me where I'm going wrong here.

But, I'm thinking if I'm Brad Trivers and I want to get, say, a 4% return inside my RRSP and I don't want to have any risk and I want to invest in my home province here, Prince Edward Island, right where I live and I want to see that money coming and staying in our economy and supporting my province, I think there are a lot of people that would choose to directly buy a Prince Edward Island bond, get a guaranteed rate of return, and it's really a win-win situation for everyone.

The province has to pay interest, but now it's going to an Islander. It's going to stay on the Island and why –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) investment (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Did you have a response to that?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: I just – before my time, I know that the province did issue bonds individually; I think is what you’re referring to, but it was extremely –

Mr. MacKay: I’ll be the first to say I’m not going to invest you.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: It was extremely cost and time consuming for resources.

There are a lot of extra costs that go into managing each individual and tracking their interest and issuing tax slips, and there’s a whole lot of behind-the-scenes administrative work that goes along with issuing any kind of debt, whereas we issue large amounts of debt at one time. That’s what these syndicates – that’s their job. That’s what they do every day and it’s much easier and streamlined for them to process.

Mr. Trivers: Okay (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: This was in place and it was evaluated in 2002 and cancelled. We did have a deposit (Indistinct) program –

Mr. J. Brown: Who was the government then (Indistinct)

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: Thanks for the addition.

Mr. Trivers: I’m not going to respond to that.

Chair: Shall the total carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: Just call Mike O’Brien, he’ll (Indistinct)

Chair: Economics, Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations

Total Economics, Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations: 9,043,000.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Minister, thank you for the handouts, but I note that we have one regarding grants in lieu for property taxes which amounts to \$1.9 million, but there’s \$8.4 million in here which appears to be the grants for income and sales tax credits and rebates.

Is there any kind of information you can provide about what that encompasses?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That actually is made up of three different grants that are offered. One is for the Low and Modest Income Household Tax Credit and that’s a rebate that low-income earners can get if they file their tax return; it just gets added onto their HST rebate.

There’s also First Nations HST rebate included in that number, and the Volunteer Firefighters Tax Credit that they can access when they file their tax return.

Ms. Bell: So those are all federally mandated or federally managed, but we pay them out of our provincial line (Indistinct)

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That’s right; they’re through our own legislation.

Ms. Bell: Just so I know where to ask the right question, can you advise where the property tax grants do appear in the schedules here?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: They appear in the general government section. That’s later on.

Mr. MacDonald: That’s after this.

Ms. Bell: Oh, okay. All right then. I’m good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

This section handles all grants for all companies or all businesses in PEI that might get a tax grant?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: No.

These are individual tax credits.

Mr. Fox: What type of individuals would get tax credits besides the normal? Is there anything outstanding?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Sorry?

Mr. Fox: Is there any different grants that somebody might receive one for?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Just the ones that I referenced here for this section.

Mr. Fox: Economic analysis. Can you go into detail on that?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: You're referring to the professional services? Is that what you're –

Mr. Fox: Economics, statistical, and federal fiscal relations. It says economic analysis.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That can be anything: trends, population, where people are spending their money.

Mr. Fox: So how many reports or analysis did you do last year? Or do you propose for this year coming up?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: It's all internal work. We do receive information from Conference Board of Canada and Statistics Canada on various things at various times. And we have access to a whole host of resources through the Conference Board of Canada that covers all the work that they do, that we have access to their libraries of information.

Mr. Fox: So what work do they do?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Who, the staff?

Mr. Fox: The Conference Board of Canada?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Well, it's a federally run agency that collects information and does projections on a multitude of things.

Mr. Fox: So what does your department work on with them?

Mr. MacDonald: It's information similar to Stats Canada. So we're taking information and utilize it to come up with different programs, or what have you, in relevant to tax credits.

Mr. Fox: So what different programs do we look at?

Mr. MacDonald: It could be statistics used for almost anything that have effect on Islanders through the Conference Board of Canada or Stats Canada.

Mr. Fox: Can you be specific? Seems to me that we don't know what's going on in this department or this under this section.

Mr. MacDonald: I don't know if it has reference in your question to what we're actually talking about.

Mr. Fox: Well, I'm wondering about this economic analysis. What are we doing analysis on economically, within economics statistics and federal fiscal relations?

An Hon. Member: Would you like a questionnaire?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

An Hon. Member: Well, ask for a questionnaire.

Mr. Fox: You got a copy of the questionnaire?

Mr. MacDonald: No, I don't have a copy of a questionnaire.

Mr. Fox: Waiting for the answer.

Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. MacDonald: Maybe we'll bring that back to you hon. member, if that's okay.

Mr. Fox: Okay for now.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Kind of on the same scene, I'm wondering if you can talk about the different types of economic analysis you did on the different carbon tax structures that were looked at by the province.

Mr. MacDonald: Could you repeat that, please.

Mr. Myers: Looking for the study that you did that looked at the different economic impacts on the different types of carbon taxes that were on the table that government looked at.

Mr. MacDonald: I might need an intervention.

Do you have an intervention, minister of environment?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: There's only one carbon tax that's on the table now and that's the federal government's carbon tax. And that's the backstop. That's the only study we need to do.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Well, that's not necessarily the case.

Mr. MacEwen: That's not true at all.

Mr. Myers: They put the framework in place and you were supposed to come up with a plan. So you had to bring in some sort of a plan, according to Trudeau. The Premier and other members have talked while this is on that – of all the different types that would exist. There is the cap-and-trade, and he talked about being fiscally neutral, and those types of things.

Obviously government looked at more than one implementation of this and in order to do it, there'd have to be some sort of an economic analysis to say: what would we get? What would the government actually make? Would it hurt any group proportionally more than another? So, i.e., would it be harder on people who make below \$25,000 a year. Would it be harder on single mothers? You'd be modeling it because you would have to. You wouldn't just (Indistinct). I certainly would hope not.

What I'm looking for is a copy of that study so we could see – I guess what I'm trying to do – whatever it is that you're doing and no

one seems to know yet, although you claim that you've released it – how the other options would have impacted Islanders. So what you didn't do, that you looked at.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: We looked at the options and the federal option is – gas prices go up, oil prices go up, electricity goes up. And we've developed a plan that did carbon pricing, but carbon-priced electricity at a lower rate to move people from oil to a renewable electrical energy.

The last time we did it, in 2010, with the energy accord, not only did we save Islanders \$25 million in electricity bills, but we reduced our carbon at the same time by 90,000 tonnes. As I said before, our plan – if Ottawa's plan is to reduce carbon, we have a plan to reduce carbon. We have a plan to match what the federal government wants. It reduces electricity rates to move people off of oil; 30 million litres of oil a year now being saved because of the 2010 energy accord – 90,000 tonnes. If we can replicate that – and we think we can replicate it – again, with our reduction that has been proposed in the Budget this time around.

We have a cap and trade system. We're going with the federal backstop for large emitters. There's only one large emitter on Prince Edward Island at the current time, that's Cavendish Farms and their last initiative was 55,000 tonnes, so they will have to work with Ottawa and we're looking for a Cavendish Farms plan for carbon reduction.

Now, I must say, Cavendish farms, I think, was at 100,000 tonnes; now they're down to 55,000 tonnes because of the emission – the biodigester reduced emissions, the compressed natural gas they're bringing in from New Brunswick has reduced emissions. They've reduced – just on the biodigester; I think they've saved 3 million litres of fuel a year. Saving money for the plant and plus, saving carbon in the atmosphere.

We think they have a good plan and with the federal government's back stop plan, they will be judged against other French fry plants in the country, of which there is a

few, and they will be judged to say: Okay, does Cavendish Farms reduce less carbon or more carbon? If they reduce less carbon, they'll get a credit that they can sell to the other French fry plants to bring some more money back into Prince Edward Island. That's the plan.

Mr. Myers: That's quite a ways off what I asked for. I don't recall asking for Cavendish Farm's plan, but what I did ask for – I do want to address something: the minister talks about getting people off oil and on to electricity. When I was driving in to Charlottetown yesterday morning, I could see the familiar black smoke plume coming from the plant down here because it was on. I wonder if the minister could tell us what that was running off.

Mr. R. Brown: Sometimes they spin their turbines. These are old, old turbines down there. These are old diesel electric engines they have down there. They've got to expend them once in a while to turn the oil and just to make sure they run and sometimes they test them.

And I'd like to announce, or Maritime Electric has already announced, that plant will be coming down in next five years. Those smokestacks will be coming down in next five years. They announced that at the last annual general meeting I went to. When I asked John Gaudet when is he going to take them tanks down? And he promised us within the next five years.

Chair: Hon. members, can we bring the discussion back to the section?

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) three or four times.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct). No.

Mr. Myers: Thank you anyways.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has the floor.

Mr. Myers: I know they're really confused over there, Chair, and I'm trying to help

straighten them back out, but they don't want to listen.

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. Myers: Yes. I'm going to ask the same question I've asked five times now.

Could the minister provide us with the studies that he did on the economic impacts and the economic gains for the province and the impacts on the people of Prince Edward Island on the different types of carbon taxes that this government looked at prior to making the decision on what to move forward with?

Mr. R. Brown: What do you mean?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) minister.

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct)

Chair: Which minister –

Mr. MacDonald: – the secondary (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The Minister of Finance.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance –

Mr. Myers: This is –

Chair: – yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh.

Mr. Myers: – his department.

Mr. MacDonald: Sorry.

Mr. Myers: It's your department.

Mr. MacDonald: We're relying, basically, on communities, land and environment –

Mr. Myers: Oh, boy. You're in trouble.

Mr. MacDonald: – to (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, wow.

Mr. MacDonald: We understand that the feds, what they've put in front of us and we're willing to challenge the feds that we're into year three and year four on carbon emissions and the plan that they've

set out. We're still in discussion with the federal government.

Mr. R. Brown: CBC has a –

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Relying on that minister, is a little dangerous. You put 600 people into the Sherwood Motel.

Government – while this discussion was going on about carbon tax there was talk about they would exempt fishers and they would exempt farmers. In order to do that, there must have been some study that said that you could afford to do it, and that it met your goals, and that you were still going to be able to take in some money.

Somebody somewhere must have a study. The reason I'm asking here is, is this is, as it relates to federal tax – so this whole federal-fiscal relations, you would think this is where carbon tax discussions would be had.

It talks about economic analysis, so if your federal-fiscal relations and economic analysis would point me, obviously, to one of the major things that's going on in Canada right now, and that's the carbon tax.

There must be some kind of a study that shows – you must have looked and said: what would we make? Because the Premier himself had said that whatever he did would be fiscally neutral. That means, he's going to take in – what fiscally neutral means is he plans to take in money and spend it –

Mr. R. Brown: Okay –

Mr. Myers: – so if that's the case, he must have had a plan for how he was going to get money, and he must have done an impact study to say, how would that affect business? How would that affect different categories of gender, of geography, of economic standing as far as what a household income would be. Those types of things you would think would be all be part of your fiscal analysis before you brought in something –

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Myers: – (Indistinct) I guess?

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

There has been a freedom of information request put in by the CBC. We gave the CBC all the stuff and they had a great story on the website. We will table that information.

You're right, it has, in there, it's 10 million, year one; 20 million, year two; 30 million, year four; 40 million, year five; 50 million. Fifty million in year five.

Farmers would be exempt from that, from being taxed, but the decision was made – why tax people to get off carbon when you may be can give them a break and they'll get off carbon, too.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thanks.

That's all I'm looking for; is the supporting documentation –

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Myers: – that –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – brought you to that decision that was –

Mr. R. Brown: – you (Indistinct) more clear.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Myers: I tried my very best to be clear, but.

On top of that –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) brick wall over there.

Mr. Myers: – let's move to HST. I'm going to move off carbon tax. I have more

questions on it, but let's see what the minister brings back.

A number of years ago, I actually sat in this House, I think it was 2012, you guys brought in HST. At the time, we had asked for the economic analysis that was done on HST; how it would impact people and how would it help government and all that.

Government, in its books, had overstated the revenues for HST for a number of years. Every year they miss it by like tens of millions of dollars. That's fine because that's the way they do budgets. Wes Sheridan told me one time: budgets are just guesswork – it doesn't mean anything; the budget is just guesswork. I've treated budgeting as such, since then, yes.

I'm wondering since the last election, the Premier has raised HST by 1%. Are you able to provide us with any economic impact analysis on how, since 2015, that 1% has impacted Islanders?

Has it pushed more people into below – pushed them – more people below the poverty line? Or, is government comfortable with the – that everybody is still as well off as they said they'd be?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not aware of any study that has been done in regards to that question, but if there is something that we can take back, we'll certainly take it back for you. If there was a study done.

Mr. Myers: I would think, you know, I would think that you have a economic statistics and you have this whole section of government that it includes doing an economic analysis and it includes things like taxes. You have tax credits and rebates; you have income tax; you have sales tax here.

I would think a socially progressive government would put, into consideration, how taxes impact Islanders.

It's one of the number one things I hear about right now. Really, it is, out my way is: I'm taxed to death. I can't pay any more taxes. I'm sick of tax. I don't have any money. I'm giving it all to the government.

I would think that it's ultra important if government would, on an annual basis, look

at their taxes and make sure that it's not – the taxes are becoming punitive to Islanders because I think Islanders are starting to feel like their taxes are really punitive.

If you look at, you know, I know people don't like talking about other leaders that they don't like, but if you look at, one that got elected was Trump and he promised to lower taxes and he seemed to wade in on that. I'm not saying I support him, but people obviously did and he won. Now, you're seeing it in other jurisdictions, where people are promising to lower taxes.

Taxes seem to be a thing that really –

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. Myers: Yeah. I asked it twice. Nobody made a move to answer it there, so I'm going to keep talking until they do.

I would think that –

Mr. MacEwen: Another filibuster.

Mr. Myers: – to me, it would be important if government had some sort of a mechanism in place to always measure.

Can you confirm that there's some mechanism inside of government that measures how taxes, as a whole, are affecting Islanders, and where you might be able to give tax relief based on that?

Mr. MacDonald: Our most recent Budget you can talk about tax relief. I mean, if you're talking about personal tax exemption, lowering that. If you're talking about small business tax credit; you're talking about the HST rebate on electricity.

I mean I think those are all things that are going to affect most people on Prince Edward Island. I think if that's what you're talking about as far as tax breaks –

Mr. Myers: Do you have a study – did you have an economic analysis study that goes along with your so-called tax relief then?

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of, but there may be one that I'm not aware of that hasn't been presented to me or something. Maybe, it's ongoing, as well, too.

Mr. Myers: I guess, I'm wondering how you decided where taxes would get relieved if you didn't have a study that would show where it would help the most?

Mr. MacDonald: I think, even in our pre-budget consultations, there are some things that can continuously come up and that's what we looked at, as a government, to say, okay, we're having – our economy is strong. How can we give back and how is it going to affect most people, and mostly those vulnerable people.

Mr. Myers: But is there an economic analysis study that supports that?

Mr. MacDonald: I'll have to check for you, as I answered before.

Mr. Myers: Could you bring back a list of studies produced by this group inside government so that we can get an idea of what type of studies they are actually doing?

I would view this group as a particularly impactful, the types of studies they could do because it relates to so much stuff, and they have – they are the relation with the federal government, or it appears to be, on federal-fiscal matters, they're the ones that do – have that close relationship.

It would be interesting to see the types of studies that they have produced that have been available for government to use to make their – build their economic policy on.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah and I'm sure there is likely internal analysis that we may be able to provide you with, as well.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thanks.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Sorry, I didn't hear the question.

An Hon. Member: Probably.

Chair: No, do you have a question?

Mr. J. Brown: Oh. No, we don't.

Long and ever ago, we answered what my question was.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

One of the programs that I really like is the equity tax credit that people can apply for if they invest in a community economic development business.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Trivers: I mean it's something that I've done with my solar panels.

I was just wondering, I guess, I had heard that there was a delay in the issuing of new shares to Solar Island Electric.

I was wondering if that's the case and how you decide – what criteria you use to decide when new shares can be issued?

Mr. MacDonald: I mean, we just went through a budget. So, that program, and I know my deputy has personally spoken to the owner of the company, just recently.

All the programs have to be reviewed after – especially after your budget to ensure that everything's in place for those programs. I think they're going through that process right now.

Mr. Trivers: In this particular case, and I mean, full disclosure, I'm an investor in Solar Island Electric, I bought shares in it for my solar panels, but there are more people that want to do that, and they can't actually go out and install solar panels. They can't get new investors until you issue those shares.

When you say, you need to do that review, I just don't understand. I mean, the community economic development business seems pretty – model seems pretty straightforward. It's got to have criteria about being owned on the Island and people have to buy the shares and hold them for five years and this sort of thing.

What sort of reviews do you have to do that would delay issuing more shares if people want to continue like that?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, you know, the depth of the program is relative to dividends being paid. Is that a requirement through the program? Is that how the program –

Mr. J. Brown: Chair?

Mr. MacDonald: – (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: As a point of order, we've got a member asking questions about a company that he's a shareholder in, I'd maybe just encourage some caution –

Mr. LaVie: There's the lawyer coming out.

Mr. J. Brown: – same member that sent a letter off to the conflict of interest commissioner earlier this session and, you know, I would think he'd be pretty in tune with the requirements and the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

Anyway, I – don't take this as me trying to act like the conflict of interest commissioner –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. J. Brown: – but I do want to voice a concern here and make sure that the member, kind of, understands the consequences of what it is that he's asking here.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good counsel right there –

Ms. Biggar: He went down this road all (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Rustico –

Mr. J. Brown: – free advice, right there.

Mr. R. Brown: Free advice.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) not even a non-profit (Indistinct)

Chair: Order! Order!

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you wish to continue –

Mr. Trivers: I certainly do. I mean –

Chair: – down this line.

Mr. Trivers: – maybe someday I'll be in Cabinet, but until then, as a backbencher asking questions, I think it's perfectly okay to do this sort of thing.

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

My question was: What kind of reviews that would cause the delay of issuing shares in a company like Solar Island Electric?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not sure – what's the delay? I have no date set that it had to be reviewed or anything like that, at a certain point in time.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: Unless, you know more than I do.

Mr. Myers: Oh no.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) go there.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) box there.

Mr. LaVie: There's no doubt he knows.

Mr. Trivers: My understanding is that, basically, it's the, sort of the spring of the year when they do the bulk of their business.

The idea is, somebody invests in Solar Island Electric, and then that allows them to get solar panels installed, right?

Then, they can apply for the equity tax credit. This is the time of year, in my understanding, where they're the busiest and so the delay, and I don't know the exact timelines, but I would assume they put in, probably, several months ago, at least, for to have to new shares issued. The delay is actually hurting their business.

I was just wondering why it would be delayed, that's all.

Mr. MacDonald: I think we're both –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct) different than a Liberal backbencher getting your PNP (Indistinct), it's the same.

Mr. MacDonald: We're both making assumptions on timing. We're both making assumptions on the discussion that was had with my office and the owner of the company.

I'm going to assume that there is a process in place and the program is being – and when I say reviewed, I'm not saying reviewed in a derogatory or negative, I'm just saying – maybe there's even a better program. I know there has been people from Belfast in my office talking about a new program that they have that is somewhat similar, but a little different.

Maybe, there's a review going on that's saying; maybe we can encompass more communities and business investments.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Moving on to a different topic, Chair.

Ms. Biggar: Good idea.

Mr. Trivers: I might have one more question on this topic after all.

Ms. Biggar: Go ahead –

Mr. LaVie: I dare you.

Mr. Trivers: Actually, I wanted to find out, in your negotiations with the federal government, what sort of funding are you trying to tap into to help build a reliable high-speed Internet on the Island? I know that there are federal funds out there with hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. MacDonald: Intervention from economic development, if that's all right.

Chair: Sure.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

We're continuing to identify the areas of the province that are really underserved by high-speed Internet.

As we develop that plan and get a better understanding of where the build needs to be and what partnerships that we can have with

private sector we'll have a better idea on the – we'll have a tighter budget, at that time.

Chair: Do you want to add something?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Minister: Are you planning to get the bulk of the money for the new high-speed Internet fibre optic backbone from the federal government?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm pretty sure it's 50/50 cost-shared.

Mr. Trivers: So, your estimates, originally, I believe, were \$30 million.

Mr. MacDonald: Thirty-five.

Mr. Trivers: \$35 million. You expect the province will pay half that and you get 50% of that from the federal government through one of these programs?

Mr. MacDonald: Approximately, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you.

I've got another question, Chair.

You had mentioned that you had issued an RFP to get companies to help with cannabis education. Has that RFP been issued?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes it has. I think the return date on it is the 29th of May.

Mr. Trivers: Are there any limits as to what companies can apply to that RFP, respond to that RFP?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Mr. Trivers: The reason I ask is, I heard it was by invitation only. There were some companies that wanted to respond, but weren't allowed. Can you confirm that that's not the case?

Mr. MacDonald: I believe, at first, it was sent out to seven local companies. Then, it went out to a broader exposure through procurement.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to be 100% clear. If there are companies on Prince Edward Island or elsewhere that (Indistinct) respond, prepare a proposal and respond to the RFP, you're wide open to any company within reason to doing that?

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: You said yes?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm just curious if you've ever done an economic analysis regarding, I guess, Islanders and how much they're paying in tax as a whole?

Like, if an Islander was to make \$1, how much of that dollar do they get to keep?

Mr. R. Brown: A dollar (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of, in my short tenure as finance minister, but perhaps –

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: When your government was elected in 2007, we saw some of the highest increase in taxes ever. We've got HST. We've got income tax; gas tax; land tax; land transfer tax. You've increased 400 fees over –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) tax.

Mr. MacKay: – the course of your government.

I'm just curious. You know, the average income on PEI is about \$36,000 a year. The number we're being told is, if you make \$1

on PEI, by the time the taxes and fees and everything come out they're left with about 30 cents out of that dollar.

I was just wondering if you've ever looked at that?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't know off the top of my head. I can't say if there's a study been done recently or not but I can certainly look into it.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, possibly, I guess, obviously it can't happen overnight, but if you could look at doing one of those studies to see how much is actually left in an Islander's pocket.

We're all hearing about it. If an Islander is trying to live off 30 cents of their dollar, it's pretty tough going. I'm just wondering if, by doing that analysis, that it might bring a little bit of light to see how badly some of our Islanders are being taxed.

Mr. MacDonald: Sure.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, I was listening to the conversation a minute ago between the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and briefly yourself.

Mr. LaVie: Nothing good came from that.

Mr. Fox: On the economic analysis, was there an actual economic analysis done on what the different forms of carbon tax or carbon neutral or carbon revenue or cap and trade would actually, how it would impact Islanders?

Mr. R. Brown: I've got it here. I'll table it.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: For my friend –

Mr. Fox: And with that –

Mr. R. Brown: – from Georgetown.

Mr. Fox: With that, the minister went and made a statement that is basically \$10 million per year for five years. The plan would be take – understanding that it would be revenue neutral, taking \$10 million out of Islanders' pockets per year, progressively for five years, what would the actual impact be on an Island family?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I'm not sure if he said he was taking \$10 million out of the Islanders' pockets per year.

Mr. Fox: I thought he said that's what it'll cost.

Mr. R. Brown: That's if we implemented the federal plan and it's in the report that I've given to my hon. friend from Georgetown a copy of.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: So did the department or this section actually do any type of economical analysis outside of what communities, land and environment has on this impact?

Mr. MacDonald: We're working very closely with communities, land and environment, and the federal government. The federal government put a backstop in place that we feel that we're beyond, and we're going in a direction that if we can create more programs, provide rebates, provide incentives like we've done in the most recent budget, then we feel that we can reduce our carbon over the course – and we feel, right now with the way we're set up, that we're into year three of the federal government's outline criteria for carbon emissions.

Mr. Fox: With any new rebates that could be coming, or any new grants, was there any work done or analysis done on how much the percentage of the population could actually have access to –

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: I think there are 60,000 electric bills in Prince Edward Island, so 60,000 households will have advantage of the lower price on electricity. Then, there is maybe another 5,000 or 6,000 on propane, they'll get a rebate. Then, there's another 5,000 or 6,000 on wood, they'll get lower energy prices and then there are the ones on woodchips.

So, I'd say close to 90% or 95% of Islanders would get something out of the energy plan, and then the other minister could talk like another half an hour –

Ms. Biggar: Yes, I could expand on that if you want me to.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

An Hon. Member: No, no (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Minister, with that, why did you only – was there any analysis done on taking off the HST off the second block, not just the first block?

Mr. MacDonald: Go ahead.

An Hon. Member: Stay tuned.

Mr. R. Brown: Stay tuned.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: That's part of our demand-side management plan, which is going forward. So those are all part of the discussions on that.

Mr. Fox: Why wouldn't you just do it?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It has to go to IRAC (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: You tell IRAC what to do.

Going back to a question a minute ago, Chair, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment alluded to gas going up. If for, say, Ottawa says what you guys have put forward doesn't meet the test or their programs, was there any analysis to actually show how much gas would go up if a carbon tax was brought in on PEI?

Mr. R. Brown: The federal (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's in the report that I gave to my hon. friend from Georgetown.

Mr. Fox: What are the numbers?

Chair: Would you like us to get a copy of the report for you?

Mr. Fox: No, I -

Mr. R. Brown: It's outlined in the federal tax and I think it's about -

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: - that we're not doing. It's 12 cents by the end of five years.

Mr. Fox: How much?

Mr. R. Brown: Twelve cents.

Mr. MacDonald: Twelve cents (Indistinct) five years.

Mr. R. Brown: We're not doing it.

An Hon. Member: That's two cents a year.

Mr. Fox: Twelve cents?

Mr. R. Brown: We're not doing it.

Mr. Fox: So was there any analysis done on what that 12 cents, if you did have to do it, would cost Islanders?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) how many (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: We can't help it when we don't live in Charlottetown.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: This is where - I'm thinking on this: You said you weren't going to raise the HST or put in the HST, and you did. You said you weren't going to raise the HST, you added another cent to it.

Why should Islanders think that you're not going to put in a carbon tax?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. R. Brown: Because we have a plan (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: You had a plan that you weren't going to bring in the HST. What happened to that plan?

An Hon. Member: Who said we had no plan?

Mr. LaVie: What plan? You never have plans.

Mr. R. Brown: Do you guys want a carbon tax? If you want a carbon tax, just say it.

Mr. Myers: We want you to be honest.

Mr. R. Brown: I am.

Chair: Hon. members, let's bring the discussion back to the section that the minister is -

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

I'm really interested in -

Mr. Myers: We're getting one anyway (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: - if the department -

An Hon. Member: After the election (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: - did any complete economic analysis on if they have to do it or if they don't have to do it, or a combination thereof, on a carbon tax.

Mr. R. Brown: I just can't understand why (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I just can't understand why you don't have faith in Islanders like we do on this side.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: No really.

Over the years, Islanders have stepped up to the carbon in our atmosphere. Islanders are one of the best stewards of the environment; I'd say worldwide. Islanders were first, and under the Pat Binns government, came in with waste watch. They embraced that. They pay \$200 a year for waste watch which saves a tonne of carbon. We're not burying this stuff. We have an energy from waste plant done by Jim Lee saving tonnes of carbon in the air.

Why don't you have as much faith in Islanders as your predecessors of Pat Binns, Jim Lee and whoever else was there on your side?

Mr. Myers: You criticize all of us (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: No I didn't. I never criticized Jim Lee. The plant was good. Pat Binns did a good job on that.

Why can't you take up some of their roles what they did in some leadership? You guys want a carbon tax. I don't know why.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) next election.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. R. Brown: So if you win the next election, you're bringing in a carbon tax.

Mr. Fox: I'm totally against the carbon tax.

An Hon. Member: Then why do you keep talking about it.

Mr. Fox: But I don't understand –

An Hon. Member: Why are you pushing for it?

Mr. Fox: I don't understand why –

Ms. Biggar: You're pushing for it.

Mr. Fox: – we would not have a clear answer from you guys that you would have went to Ottawa and said: Under no circumstances are you going to shove your carbon tax down our throats.

Why didn't you do that?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) plan.

Chair: Hon. member, could you make sure your words are (Indistinct) worthy of the House?

Mr. Fox: I'm trying to hold back, I'll be honest.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: No.

Chair: Nothing? Thank you.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Fox: I have one further question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

In your handouts here, you had a point of sale rebate information grant and it was for \$2,800. What was that for?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That was information from Stats Canada that's used to estimate the cost of point of sale rebates of HST on children's footwear and clothing.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Can we have a copy of that report?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: We can bring that back, yeah.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thanks.

Another one that caught my eye was the provincial government e-library and there was \$40,000 for that. What was that grant for?

Mr. MacDonald: This allows access to all Conference Board of Canada's research and reports for all government employees.

Mr. Myers: So it's a subscription service that you paid for, is that what it is?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, access to over about 8,000 documents, I think.

Mr. Myers: Is that access available to Members of the Legislative Assembly?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't know. I'll check on it. I don't see why it wouldn't be.

Mr. Myers: The other one is the economic and statistical information e-data. Can you tell us what that one is?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: That's access to their actual economic databases. So, the other one relates to their library of reports, whereas this is you can actually download their data and manipulate it and add in our own information if need be and create our own analysis.

Mr. Myers: What type of information would be in that? Is it all tax-type information?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: I think we referred earlier that we were going to bring back what types of information. The Conference Board of Canada, like I said, they have over 8,000 documents in their other – so they do tons of different types of analysis and research that – from policy to where people spend their money to all different facets all across the Country. So, your department might use it for one thing and finance might use it for something else. There's all varying kinds of information that's available to employees.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd just like to go back, for a minute, to the RFP for the cannabis education contract.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I can't see that anywhere on the government site. I had also heard that that was by invitation only.

I just want to clarify a couple of things about that. Is that RFP still open, firstly?

Mr. MacDonald: It is open until the 29th, I think. I'm almost positive it's till the 29th.

That RFP was under \$50,000, the initial one –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: – so it doesn't have to go through procurement, per se, to Atlantic Canada.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: What they did, right off the bat, and it was actually through the department of health that actually put it out. It wasn't through Finance PEI. He may be able to speak more on it, on the RFP that was released on cannabis, we're talking about.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Maybe the minister is about to take his seat. He has an intervention on that, I would –

Chair: Maybe you could –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – welcome it.

Chair: – repeat the question?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

It was about the RFP for the cannabis education contract. Two hon. members of the House have heard from people who were willing and able to apply for that, that it was by invitation only.

I wanted to check the RFP is still open, firstly and if it is, whether anybody can apply for that contract?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct) I guess, first of all, would be: Are they local companies or who is –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Island companies.

Mr. Mitchell: Island companies? I guess, you know, if there is some interest in our RFP, we could probably look at something like that.

Obviously, this is being driven through (Indistinct) office, and they will be aligning up with an education piece of the cannabis file, so that people are well informed of usage; what type of usage for our youth to know, how they should protect themselves, that type of thing.

The reason why they would have done something by invitation, I don't have the specific answer to that. It's probably a normal process, maybe, for that section of the health side. I'd have to look – I'd have to investigate that and bring that answer back.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I guess, when I realized it went to seven or eight local companies, I said that we should send it out broader, like give it all the exposure it needs.

We don't have to, but that was the anticipation in the last comment that I had through the department of health. I'm assuming it's out there or somewhere out there. I can check on you for that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I would really appreciate that (Indistinct) some information about how a local company that is qualified, and able and willing and keen to put in a bid for that contract would be able to do that.

Mr. MacDonald: There is a youth group that someone from your office gave me, too. I forget the name –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, sure –

Mr. MacDonald: – of the company.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that's an off-Island. That's a national organization –

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – this is a local start-up company, perfectly positioned to do exactly this. They wanted to apply to the RFP, couldn't find where it was –

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – had heard it was by invitation only –

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – so I really –

Mr. MacDonald: – you send the name –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – and I'll make sure they get a copy.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I will do that, minister.

Thank you, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Just two final points. Minister, you said a minute ago that farmers were exempt. What would the – what about fishermen, what's the impact on them?

Mr. MacDonald: Richard, fishermen versus farmers?

Well, fishermen are exempt. What's your evaluation on the fishers versus farmers?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: There is no tax. No carbon tax that's being applied in our plan.

Mr. MacDonald: To anything, right?

Mr. R. Brown: Okay. We have to get that straight. Now, maybe the opposition wants carbon tax, but our plan doesn't include a carbon tax –

Ms. Biggar: Come on in.

Mr. R. Brown: – there are 80 million litres of fuel –

Mr. MacDonald: That's it.

Mr. R. Brown: – diesel fuel purchased a year. Forty million litres of that 80 million litres is marked gas. That's a lot and that is exempt under the federal jurisdiction.

Mr. MacDonald: Fifty per cent is exempt all ready.

Mr. Fox: But a minute ago, minister, you said that, you specifically said: farmers would be exempt. What are they exempt from then?

Mr. R. Brown: The federal backstop.

Mr. Fox: Yeah. With the federal backstop –

Mr. R. Brown: There's no need for an exemption under our plan because they're even taxed.

Mr. Fox: Okay, so under the federal backstop, is there anything there for fishermen? Are our fishermen protected underneath that backstop?

Mr. R. Brown: Under the federal system, farmers are exempt and we did send a letter to the minister questioning, you know, the definition of farmer. And the Premier has said in his House statement that's included in the package that fishermen, we have a concern with the federal program when it comes to fishermen.

Our thing back to the minister, the federal minister, on her plan, is to say; if you're going to implement anything, you better not include marked gas – diesel.

Mr. Fox: Could you table a copy of that letter that was sent to Ottawa that asked for that?

One final question. Do you have any documentation or signed commitment from Ottawa that if your plan meets their requirements that there will be no carbon tax?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: The plan that Ottawa has put forward said we have to have plan in September. We are submitting out plan in

September. They will review the plan with other provinces; New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, I think Manitoba; all those plans are going in.

They will review and say if they meet the requirements or not.

Mr. Fox: I understand that.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Do you have any signed documentation clarifying or confirming what you just stated, from Ottawa?

Mr. R. Brown: They've asked for a plan. We've given them a plan. If the objective of the federal government is to reduce carbon then we have a plan that will reduce carbon without a tax.

So, my question to the federal minister will be: Do you want a carbon reduction plan? We have a carbon reduction plan.

Mr. Fox: I understand that, minister.

I understand what you're saying, minister. I'll say it again: If you submit a plan to Ottawa, do you have anything confirmed in writing from Ottawa saying that there would be no carbon tax if your plan meets their requirements?

Mr. R. Brown: That answer is implicit in what Ottawa has asked us; asked the provinces. If you have a plan, submit your plan and it will be evaluated.

Chair: I think the hon. Premier has an intervention.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Just to say, Chair, that we're dealing with the Minister of Finance's business here. There is a plan that was presented a week ago, Friday.

We know what Ottawa's timelines are. I think if the member opposite keeps talking, he keeps saying he doesn't want a tax but, then he turns around and he tries to get a tax. We had better just see if we can bide our time on this and we put a plan forward.

We're doing the same thing on the cables under the Strait. They've tried this and tried that. If they'd kept talking we'd have no cables, yet. Just let things bide their time. That's what we're doing. I think we're – lots of evidence that Islanders believe that we're doing a good job of it.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: It's funny the Premier brings that up because I remember, and I was there, and the Premier said that the cables would reduce –

Chair: Hon. member, let's go back –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Chair: Let's go back to the –

Mr. Fox: I'm going to bring it around to this, okay?

Chair: I'll give you a little leeway, but if it doesn't come back around, we're going to move on.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

You said, Premier, that when the cables, and I was fully supportive of the cables. You couldn't get the cables in fast enough for me. I understand that.

But you stated that Islanders would see lower electricity rates with the cables. It never happened.

The question is: Was there any analysis, economic analysis done, or if it was done, was there any commitment from Ottawa that there would be no carbon tax if your plan met the requirements of Ottawa?

Is there anything signed? Confirmed document?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) what they said: if your plan meets our requirements, then we accept your plan. That's it. Why would I need a –

Mr. Fox: Final question.

Mr. R. Brown: What?

Mr. Fox: Final question.

What happens, minister –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – no, you never actually yet.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have a question?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

What happens if Ottawa does not accept your plan?

Mr. R. Brown: Boy oh boy, I don't know why you are so against Islanders when it comes to reducing carbon in the –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – no, that's what you're arguing. You're saying Islanders aren't living up to the standards of reducing carbon. I say they do. I say: when Islanders speak to Ottawa, Ottawa should agree with that. I don't know why you're against Islanders – against them saying they're not going to meet the requirements of the carbon reduction. I believe they are. Our government believes they are. I don't know you guys don't believe they are.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: In the professional and contract services there is a report here for the PEI fibre network backbone design. Who did that project, minister?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: It's in IT.

Mr. MacDonald: In the last section.

Chair: Do you mind holding that question until the IT section? It's on the next – two pages over.

Mr. MacEwen: No, actually the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters asked about two or three of the very next ones in this department and the minister answered those, so I'm pretty sure he can handle this.

Chair: Well, we'd like to keep the discussion – if you don't mind.

Mr. MacEwen: Well, to be fair –

Chair: Do you have another question?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes I do. Thank you, Chair.

The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters asked about – literally in the exact same chart and the minister said he could bring it back. So I'm wondering if the minister could tell me who the consultant was for the PEI fibre network backbone design.

Mr. MacDonald: I believe it was Stantec.

Mr. MacEwen: Do you believe it was, or was it?

Mr. MacDonald: It was Stantec as far as I know, yes. But I'll confirm to make sure, but I'm pretty sure off the top of my head it was Stantec.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: It is Stantec.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, it was Stantec. It's in here.

Mr. MacEwen: Could you give me that report, please?

Mr. MacDonald: Sure. We could get it and take it back, could we – as long as there is no third party legality that we can't. We know we've got into this discussion several times with you guys in regards to if there is something that makes it unfair competition amongst companies. But we'll get an opinion on that and if I can give it to you, I'll give it to you.

Mr. MacEwen: When do you think you could have that back?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't know; a couple weeks.

Mr. MacEwen: You said you had something right there in front of you. Why would it take a couple of weeks?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't have it right in front of me. She had –

Vicki Hamilton CFO: (Indistinct) found the name.

Mr. MacDonald: We had the name. She found the name Stantec in her notes.

Mr. MacEwen: Why would it take a couple of weeks to bring that report?

Mr. MacDonald: What do you me to say? Twenty four – I'm giving myself two weeks because if I say two days and I don't get it to you then you'll likely be upset that I didn't give it to you in two days. If I say two weeks, it's giving me some lead time to get maybe even a legal opinion on it and the information and give it back to you.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry to get you upset, minister. I just know that we've asked other minister for stuff. For example, we asked the minister of fisheries for the number –

Mr. LaVie: Seven years ago.

Mr. MacEwen: – the different buyers that were going to be on the wharves this year and I don't think we've got that back and that was like the first day of estimates.

You'll remember in Question Period one time I asked about stuff that hadn't been brought back for a year and a half. That would be my concern when we say: Yes, we'll get that back to you. We've got to put it through the lawyers there first and sometimes it gets forgotten about. So I appreciate you taking it diligently and marking that down and getting that back to me within two weeks.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Just a further on to the question that the member from Borden had; have a you done a study on – so if the requirements of the

federal government aren't met because it's an escalating steps that they take on reduction, so if they don't get met, then government either has to impose a carbon tax or Ottawa's going to impose it on, so we don't have a choice and government seems content in giving up control or at least not fighting back with Ottawa.

Have you guys done an impact study on how that escalated carbon tax would have an effect on Islanders? Not just Islanders, but, in particular, rural Islanders because we drive everywhere we go. I burn a tank of gas a week in my car just on light travel. So if I was doing heavier travel, I would burn a lot more. I would say I would be the average of people who work outside of their area for a rural Islander and I would burn a tank of gas a week. If government is content to let Ottawa impose it, I'm wondering what study you've done to show how that would negatively impact rural Islanders.

Mr. MacDonald: I think right now, as the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment discussed, we're in discussions. We have a plan in place. We have additional items that will be adding to the plan as of, likely, today. We had a discussion on, as well, this morning. So we feel very confident that Ottawa's going to look to Prince Edward Island as possibly even a leader in Canada for carbon emissions. So until – and this is May. We're in May and they're asking for something in September. So we've got a ways to go yet and we have further discussions with Ottawa, but we feel comfortable that our plan is going to satisfy Ottawa.

Mr. Myers: The liberal speak – it's a lot of confidence that you'll ever live up to, which is great, and why it is why Canadians have lost trust in government because we've been under Liberal rule for so long that people haven't been talked straight to in a number of years.

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. Myers: Yes. I need to get to it, though – like if you could give me a second.

Because of that, I don't think that you're looking around the corner at all. So you're saying: they're going to accept our plan, their plan is great. Well, they have a

framework and their framework is set up so that the carbon comes down a lot every year and if we don't meet that then there's punitive tax to measure that. So what I'm wondering, I guess – first I'll start here: Would you agree with me that a carbon tax is harder on rural Islanders?

Mr. MacDonald: Any tax is hard on all Islanders. We're talking about a carbon neutral. That's our focus and that's our discussion. Nobody's talking about a carbon tax except the opposition. We're pushing ahead with our plan and –

Mr. Fox: Same as the HST.

Mr. MacDonald: We're pushing ahead with our plan and we feel we're in a very good position going forward with Ottawa.

Mr. Myers: I guess, in fairness to us, we're asking questions because you're not talking about it and Islanders don't feel like you're being straight with them – which is the Liberal way – and I understand that – giving a lot of Islanders a great distaste for Liberals.

But I want to ask my question again: Would you agree that a carbon tax would hit rural Islanders the hardest?

Mr. MacDonald: We don't know what level that would be.

There are all kinds of assumptions that you're asking me to make and I'm not prepared to make those assumptions. What I am prepared to say is we got an extremely plan to go to Ottawa with and further to that, negotiating in public, when we're in that phase with Ottawa, I don't think – and I think anybody sitting in the Legislature because we're negotiating on behalf of Islanders. to suggest that we go public with our negotiations, I don't think would be effective.

Mr. Myers: So Trudeau originally, when he imposed carbon tax on the provinces, he wanted you to have it in place for January that just went past here and then he changed that.

But given the fact that that was the original target, you'd think that you'd be able to answer that simple question about whether

or not you think the carbon taxes would be harder on rural Islanders. I will tell you why it is, and member from Borden touched on it, it's the high gas prices to start.

So just to start, the higher gas prices because rural Islanders – we don't have a transit system. So we can't just jump on a bus and go across Charlottetown like people in Charlottetown can. Everywhere we go, we have to drive. I will take myself as an example. I live in Cardigan, so the closest grocery store is Montague. It's probably about 12 minutes from where I live. So it's 24 minutes in the car to get groceries. I can't take a bus, there is no other way. I could walk, I guess. It would take me about eight hours to walk there.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: The City of Charlottetown amalgamated with all the different (Indistinct) –

Chair: Hon. member, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has the floor.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I like the interaction of the Charlottetown people who don't understand how rural communities work. So, I think, for me – so that's as simple as to get groceries; if you have to run to the school for your children, most people, the school isn't in their neighbourhood anymore, it's a drive.

Your whole life, when you live in rural Prince Edward Island, it's in your car to be able to do the thing. We don't complain about that. It's one of the great things about rural life, too, is we have the great wide open.

But, if a carbon tax were brought in and gas prices went up 12 cents that would impact rural Islanders more than it would impact urban Islanders. I have friends, who live in Charlottetown, too, and they're astonished that I spend \$80 a week in gas to travel. I have a –

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Myers: Is there a time limit on how long it takes me to get it out?

Chair: No, but I just trying to –

Mr. Myers: Yeah, okay –

Chair: – I've got other people on the list, so –

Mr. Myers: – I lost my train of thought. I feel like I have to start at the start.

I have a friend, a good friend of mine, who lives in Sherwood. He said: I wouldn't spend \$80 in a month in gas. Which is understandable. I know there's other costs that are higher of living in Charlottetown.

Mr. Mitchell: It's me.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, his name is Robert.

Mr. MacEwen: Robert from Sherwood.

Mr. Myers: Anyway, I think that when you look at those. So, I have a friend, who spends \$80 a month, and I spend \$80 a week, I spend four times the amount per month in the gas prices, based on carbon tax would impact somebody, who lives in a rural area more than it would impact somebody who lives in an urban area; strictly based on nothing more than gas. We're not talking about any of the other facets of the carbon tax.

Would you agree, based on that evidence that I presented, that that is true?

Mr. LaVie: Do you want him to start over again?

Mr. MacDonald: You're making assumptions that there is a tax and there has been no discussion on our side of the House that there is a tax.

Mr. Myers: No. The section that we're in right now has to do with economic analysis.

My point is, is that if you were supposed to implement a carbon tax last January, somebody must have done an economic analysis that said: boy oh boy, if gas went up

12 cents a litre, that it would impact people, who live in Cardigan more than it would impact people in Charlottetown. That's my point.

Somebody must have done a study along the way that said, because, if what you say is true, and I doubt it, but if what you say is true, then you're not implementing a carbon tax. Well, why? Because you did a study that said it was going to hurt somebody more. That's all I'm trying to say. I'm trying to say that somewhere somebody must have looked at it.

That's not complicated. You have 6,000 people work for government, and somebody didn't study that gas prices would hurt somebody, who lives in Cardigan more than Charlottetown.

Mr. MacDonald: I don't think you have to be a rocket scientist to figure out if you live further away from your job, it's going to cost you more money to get there.

Mr. Myers: Thank you –

Mr. MacDonald: Is that what you're looking for as an answer?

Mr. Myers: Well, I guess, if a smart answer is all you can provide versus one that's based on fact.

Somebody have done a study. There is more to it than that. Groceries delivered to the Montague Superstore would cost more than groceries delivered to the Charlottetown Superstore because you have to drive a tractor trailer that much further.

All of those have impacts somewhere along the way. Somebody has to have done a study because this was supposed to be implemented in January. That's the part – I don't know – am I not being – like am I confusing the question when I say –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) talking about something (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You made a decision. The minister of communities presented a report. The decision was based on something. He didn't just pull that out of the air and say: this is what I decided is best. There is

statistical analysis behind it somewhere. That's how he made the decision.

All I'm trying to get to is: Can we have it?

Are all Islanders – have the capability to look at those and get the same kind of information?

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Chair: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

Minister, I need you to read this.

Mr. MacDonald: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, May 24th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, May 24th, at 2:00 p.m.